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METHODISM

IN ITS

ORIGIN, ECONOMY, AND PRESENT POSITION:

A SERMON IN THREE PARTS,

THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS

PREACHED BEFORE THE WESLEYAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE,

IN CITY-ROAD CHAPEL, LONDON,

ON MONDAY, THE FIRST OF AUGUST, MDCCCXLII.

PUBLISHED BY THEIR ORDER.

BY THE REV. JAMES DIXON,

EX-PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR:
SOLD BY JOHN MASON, 14, CITY-ROAD,
AND 66, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1843.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JAMES NICHOLS,
HOXTON-SQUARE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In preparing for the press the Sermon delivered before the Conference, it was found necessary to re-compose the whole. The arrangement and topics remain unaltered; but liberty has been taken in introducing new arguments and illustrations in support of the several positions then laid down.

It has been thought best to divide the discourse into three distinct parts, as each subject—though it is hoped the whole is in unity with itself—may be regarded as complete.

Whatever reception the Sermon may meet with amongst his Brethren and the people in general, the Author feels it a happiness to bear his humble testimony to the great work which God has wrought in the world, by the instrumentality of Methodism.

To his Brethren, in Conference, who unanimously requested the publication of the Sermon, the Author owes, and tenders, his warmest acknowledgments. But in the circumstances in which it now appears, it would be wrong to claim for it their *official confirmation.*

A general approval—without being pledged to every sentiment—is all that the Author understood as meant by the vote for its publication; and if, in its enlarged form, it may secure this, together with the promotion of a spirit of increased confidence and piety in the body, his highest hopes will be gratified.

MANCHESTER, *March* 11*th*, 1843.

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METHODISM

IN ITS

ORIGIN, ECONOMY, AND PRESENT POSITION:

A SERMON.

NEVERTHELESS, WHEREUNTO WE HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED, LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME THING.—PHILIPPIANS III. 16.

THE Apostle was naturally solicitous that the disciples at Philippi should, after his time, remain faithful to the principles of the Gospel which he had taught. Had his advice been universally regarded, innumerable heresies, which have corrupted and deformed the truth itself, would have been avoided, and superstitious observances, the bane of the purity, vigour, and life of the church, prevented. The history of Christianity is a faithful record of the consequences of a departure from the apostolic injunction. A divergence, in various degrees, from the simple and uncorrupt doctrines of our Lord and his Apostles, together with the principles and precedents of the truly primitive church, has led to most disastrous consequences. The effects are seen in the early growth of error, which, continuing to accumulate with the progress of time, at length grew to such a height as to obscure the truth, and present living Christianity, for ages, as little better than one enormous heresy.

From the same cause, communities and nations, bearing the Christian name, have sunk to the lowest point of moral degradation. With no clear enunciation of the Gospel to guide their footsteps, no faithful exhibition of the Saviour's cross, no offer of that which constitutes the essence and power of religion,—salvation by faith, and no spiritual worship leading the penitent and believing into the presence of Almighty God; they naturally glided into a state of superstition, irreligion, and practical impiety. As the truth elevates and makes free, so the substitution of falsehood and human ceremonies in its place, bewilders and enslaves. Through a long and dreary period, scarcely any thing presents itself to the eye of the observer, as associated with the Christian name, but mental and spiritual prostration, followed by the iron rule of despotism. That sacred system of reli-

gion, which, when preserved in its own pure and unsophisticated doctrines and ordinances, administers knowledge, salvation, the consolations of grace, the motives and power of holiness, and, consequently, leads to freedom;—in the hands of its designing corrupters, only ministered bewildering fables, polluting dogmas, the dread of ghostly and mysterious powers possessed only by themselves, and issued in the almost universal extinction of true religion for many ages. All this, with much more, constitutes the dreary picture of Christianity in every place; and the whole resulted from inattention to the apostolic injunction delivered to the primitive church: "*Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*"

The same caution is applicable to ourselves, as a Christian body. The duty, however, must rest on the evidence of several important facts. It supposes that, in our leading and essential views, principles, and proceedings, our system corresponds with the primitive model. If we have not "*walked by this rule,*" we can be under no obligation to continue to "*mind the same thing;*" rather, the obligation would lie on the other side, and it would be our duty to abandon our ancient landmarks, and inquire, with Pilate, though in a different spirit, "*What is truth?*" This point must be at once conceded. No Christian community can be under a necessity to remain in heresy, in schism, or in obstinate separation, if these cases of sin can be made out against it. But if, on the other hand, it rests on the one "*foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;*" and if "*a dispensation of the Gospel has been committed to it;*" if the Lord has wrought a great spiritual work in the world by its instrumentality; if its order and discipline are found to conserve and advance this work in the souls of the people under its influence; if deep, wide, and great religious interests on a large scale, and an extended surface, are involved in its existing doctrines and polity; if a numerous, intelligent, and pious people are obviously "*making their calling and election sure,*" under its fostering care; and, moreover, if the blessing of God continues to crown its efforts for the conversion of men, at home and abroad;—then it is clearly the duty of such a church to be faithful to its trust, to "*walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing.*"

That which is thus stated hypothetically, regarding any church in general, must now be examined as to ours in particular. If it can be made out, that, by the blessing of God, the true doctrines of the Gospel are held, a system of means originated, and a spirit of genuine religion created identical with New-Testament truth, times, and precedents, then the apostolic exhortation must be applicable to us. Methodism is a great fact. Irrespective of reasoning, it exists; and the means of its formation is a question worthy of examination, as

well as its spirit, doctrines, and polity. It cannot be deemed, we hope, unsuitable to the present important occasion, impartially to review our position as a Christian community. The times are peculiar; the doctrines and principles of church polity are being sifted; we are not likely to be left to repose in peace; assaults from many quarters are being made upon us already; and, judging from the attitude assumed by some parties, perhaps more formidable and virulent opposition may be expected. In this state of things, it is our duty to examine whether our "*house is built on the sand,*" or "*on a rock.*"

In considering our position as a Christian community, it will be requisite,

I. To EXAMINE THE QUESTION IN ITS PURELY SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS BEARINGS;

II. To INVESTIGATE THE SUBJECT IN ITS ECCLESIASTICAL OR ECONOMICAL ASPECTS;

III. To JUDGE OF THE HARMONY OF ITS PRINCIPLES AND MEANS, WITH THE OBVIOUS DESIGNS OF THE GOSPEL, IN EVANGELIZING THE WORLD.

PART I.

WE ARE TO EXAMINE THE QUESTION OF OUR POSITION IN A PURELY SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW.

THE character of the movement which is now, and, indeed, has long been, going on, must be sought primarily in the purely religious spirit of Methodism. Forms and professions, in our case, were preceded by a living piety, which gave them all their peculiar cast.

Genuine Christianity is obviously intended to produce practical and saving results; and such results must originate in divine power. In the absence of such fruit, we have reason to suspect that the truth is not announced, and that any church-system failing in this point, however applauded, is either vicious in principle, or corruptly administered. On the other hand, when we behold the preaching of the word in "*power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;*" the services of the sanctuary administering grace, consolation, and spiritual life, to those who devoutly wait upon God; the prayers of the church answered in "*showers of blessing;*" and all issuing in the illumination, pardon, and holiness of great numbers of persons, previously "*dead in trespasses and in sins;*" then we have proof of sound doctrine, a genuine religious, and, indeed, a directly divine, result.

Both our Lord and his Apostles put the test of a true and valid commission on this practical proof: "*Beware,*" said our Saviour,

"*of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* YE SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (Matt. vii. 15, 16, 22, 23.) St. Paul appeals to the same test: "*Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*" (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.)

This kind of evidence cannot, indeed, be the first and chief proof of a divine call; but it is essential that such evidence should be given as a witness of its validity. An individual Christian, who should profess faith in Christ, and affirm that he enjoyed all the blessings of an adopted and regenerate state, and yet fail to give proof of the genuineness and divinity of the work by spiritual and holy fruit, would be justly considered either an enthusiast or an Antinomian. The change of his heart, indeed, would lie much beyond this external holiness, and must originate in the blessing of God; but the latter is always, and rightly, considered as an essential part of the work of grace.

It is the same with respect to a ministry, or a church. The primary call and designation is eminently divine, and not cognizable by us; and involves all the prerogatives of Deity, the sovereignty of grace and government, the operations of the Holy Spirit, and all the great principles of the kingdom of Christ; for, inasmuch as he is the "*Head of his body the church,*" it follows that the ministerial function must originate in his election and grace. All this is prior to, and independent of, any external and ministerial fruit. The evidence of St. Paul's call to the apostleship lay, in the first instance, in its extraordinary circumstances, and must be limited to himself. No other parties could be judges of the first *depositum* of "*this grace.*" It was a solemn transaction of transcendent grandeur and importance, between "*the Lord of the harvest,*" and his servant, whom he had chosen to "*send forth into his harvest.*" But allowing this to be the case, the fruits of apostolical inspiration, teaching, miracles, and labours, must be necessary to give corroboration to the spiritual and hidden call. Had nothing religious and divine resulted in the mission and ministry of this "*chosen vessel,*" where would have been the proof of his being so chosen? In addition to the extraordinary change, the personal holiness, the spiritual gifts, of this eminent man, the world saw multitudes converted to the faith,

the foundation of numerous churches laid, a great company of believers rallying round his standard, and the whole exhibiting the evidences of Christian piety. These were the fruits of his divine vocation; these were the corroborative evidences of its genuineness.

The successors of the Apostles ought to embrace the whole of their vocation. If they profess to hold their commission, they are bound in all fairness to give evidence of the fact by corresponding labours and results. Of what value can a pretended office be considered, which fails to accomplish the purposes of its origination? Those who not only put in an exclusive claim to this honour and dignity, but also anathematize all others as intruders and not Ministers, and their charges as assemblies of schismatics and Heathens and not churches, cannot complain if the proof of their own "*apostleship*" be demanded in such fruits as surrounded the triumphant labours of those who really bore the office.

How comes it to pass, that, in connexion with this supposed valid line, this only divinely-commissioned ministry, this exclusively guarded, sanctioned, and authenticated function,—we ask, How comes it to pass, that all possible doctrinal, moral, disciplinary, and social abominations have grown up? All the enormities of Popery, all the superstitions of the Greek Church, and, to speak in the mildest terms, the defective piety, through long periods, in our own national Church, stand connected with this supposed exclusive descent of ministerial rights and grace. When it is affirmed, that no moral delinquencies in the "successors of the Apostles" can invalidate their commission, or render their ministrations ineffective, is it meant, that this benefit extends to their flocks as well as to themselves? because, for ages and ages, we see Priest and people involved in the same enormous profligacies and crimes.

Surely we must have some valid rule by which to judge of such a case. What does efficacy in this claim mean? When it is said, "The impiety of the Minister, who has received this commission, does not invalidate the efficacy of the sacraments, rites, and ordinances of the Church; and, moreover, all worthy recipients are regenerated in the sacrament of baptism, and continue to retain justifying and saving grace in the sacrament of the Lord's supper;" is it meant, that this grace, thus received, leaves its subjects just in the same immoralities and sins as the most wicked, and yet is, at the same time, efficacious? To what end is it efficacious? Evidently not "*unto salvation.*" We urge this question, because of its importance. If it were really true, that the parties, claiming to be exclusively apostolical Ministers, bore this honoured commission, and the divine grace and blessing were limited to their order, irrespective of the religious and moral character of the holders, and that nothing can invalidate the efficacy of their administrations; then it follows, that fruit correspond-

ing to the purity of primitive doctrine must appear. But we find not this fruit, except in the case of converted Ministers, be their station what it may; so that the assumed commission has no corroboration.

Assumption and exclusion exist together. Those who claim to be the *only* Ministers, and their flocks to be the only church of God, of necessity exclude and repudiate all others. We are one of these excluded (not to say, excommunicated) communities. We are grieved more on account of others than ourselves, that this should be the case. A want of the fraternal love, so often inculcated in the New Testament, is not the only evil involved. The theories which set up an exclusive claim for catholic truth and communion, as developed in the views and movements of the party referred to, are, we believe, false, as well as uncharitable. Their spread is to be deplored most, on the ground of their dragging from their obscure recesses the long-exploded errors of past generations, and making their anti-evangelical opinions the basis of a new, combined, and, it would seem, powerful religious demonstration. That our doctrines should be branded as heresy, our views of religious enjoyment as fanaticism, and our church-fellowship as schism, are matters of no great moment, otherwise than as the spirit engendering these sentiments must exist as a new element of sectarian bigotry, and thus prevent the growth of true religion, though the parties claim for themselves a pure catholicity.

But the attempt to establish "*another Gospel*" is a much more serious subject. It is not our business to deal with this question at present; otherwise the charge might easily be made out. Whatever may be the truth regarding *ourselves*, the movement in question is either a new apostasy, or a return to the old one. Its universality is its bane. It perverts the holy Scriptures; the atonement of our Lord; the genuine offices and influences of the Holy Spirit; the legitimate nature of the ministry and the church; the true design of the institution of the holy sacraments; the evangelical substance of Christian doctrine; the characteristics and specific nature of experimental religion; together with the freedom and just rights of God's people and household. All these great and fundamental parts of Christianity are made the subjects of this new assault. This is the distressing part of the case. In disputes which only involve personal or party considerations, it is undignified, often unchristian, to intermingle in the strife; but when God's own truth, and God's own work, are involved, the matter assumes a different aspect: it is base to be silent.

More with a view to self-vindication, and the establishment of our own people in the "*faith once delivered*" to them by their fathers, than with any hope of convincing others, we bring forward the proof that a genuine experimental work of religion has been wrought amongst us. To accomplish this, it will be necessary,

I. To give a sketch of the faith and effects of primitive Christianity;

II. To examine whether our system harmonizes with this primitive model; and then,

III. If this is the case, to apply the apostolical canon, "*Walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.*"

I. WE ARE TO GIVE A SKETCH OF THE FAITH AND EFFECTS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

1. The first and apostolic promulgation of the Gospel was evidently designed to produce an experimental faith; and any system that is in harmony with this design must lead to similar results.

The world "*without God*" is involved in this dismal state, not on the ground of a non-existent medium of light and grace, but of unbelief. Two only modes of enjoying "*the things of God*" can be conceived, that of open vision, as possessed by the blessed in heaven, or, by the instructions of revelation, and the ordinances of religion, received through faith. The ignorance, depravity, idolatry, and misery of the "*world lying in the wicked one,*" is the result of its severance from God. This loss arises from the neglect and abuse of those instruments of knowledge, grace, and salvation which He has never failed to furnish; and this of necessity leads to a spiritual night of bewildering darkness. The absence of the truth from the human mind involves, in fact, the absence of faith; and this in its turn the absence of God in the riches of his grace, and the energy of his saving power. What must follow? The springs and fountains of depravity in the human heart are all broken up, man becomes an active agent in evil, and the world is filled with every form of sin and misery. Hence the divine economy, whether considered in its primary revelations and provisions, in its regular and continuous operations, or, in cases of its decay, in a recovery of its power and mercy, will have for its object the restoration of the alienated heart of man to God by faith.

Religion, in all its means and influence, is the re-establishment of God's kingdom amongst men; the erection of his rectoral throne, and the promulgation of his laws; the formation of his temple on earth, and the opening of its gates for his worship; the preparation, by the administration of its grace through the priesthood of Christ, of a medium of communion with the "*Father of spirits;*" and, above all, it is the free and saving exhibition of his mercy and love in the pardon of sin, and the rich effusions of his Spirit in the renewal of the soul, and the joys of holiness.

The Christian, which is the last and concentrated form of all the dispensations of the divine religion, as given from the first faint dawn, to the last bright and meridian displays of God's love, had this great

design. It proposed one only object, by one only means,—at least, all others were included in this one,—the restoration of God to man in the fulness of his knowledge, love, and glory; and, as the effect of this, the recovery of his wandering sheep to the fold and favour of their heavenly Shepherd.

This practical and saving purpose is observable in every provision of the Christian system. No doubt, it has its sublimities, its mysteries, its hidden agencies, its "*heavenly sanctuary*," and ministry; but the end is the salvation of mankind. The incarnation of our Lord took place, that, being "*God with us*," "*the Word made flesh, and dwelling amongst us, we might behold his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" If we descend from this highest to the very lowest provision of the Christian economy, we shall meet with only this one design,—the purpose of God "*to dwell again with man upon the earth*," and to draw, by every possible means, this creature of his love to the enjoyment of himself. The great body of revealed truth, the cross of our dying Lord, the discharge of his priestly office before the throne above, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the establishment of the church on earth, the promulgation of divine truth by preaching and otherwise, the administration of the sacraments, and the communion of saints; all have one and the same purpose, as the "*manifestation of God in the flesh;*"—namely, the drawing together of "*all things in Christ*," that the Deity may dwell, in grace, amongst his redeemed children, and that they, in their turn, may, in assurance and peace, say, "*Abba, Father.*"

2. What constituted apostolic preaching, and wherein consisted the strength and glory of primitive doctrine?

St. Paul asserts, on this subject, "*The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation.*" (Rom. i. 16.) It follows, that the genuine Gospel comprehends, promulgates, and brings into actual operation, "*in power*," the means of salvation; and, moreover, if rightly proclaimed, and believingly embraced, works, "*effectually*" and certainly, the illumination, repentance, justification, "*new birth*," and holiness,—all included in the word "*salvation*,"—of all who are thus brought under its influence. This is the legitimate and scriptural test of the Gospel being effective, and of church-ordinances administered, in any place, and amongst any people, in their truth and power. Those Ministers who "*open*" no "*blind eyes*," who "*turn*" no enslaved sinners "*from Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified*," whatever may be their credentials, cannot possibly hold a *divine* commission, preach the "*unsearchable riches of Christ*," or perform their duties through that "*power from on high*," for which our Lord directed his first witnesses to "*tarry at Jerusalem*" till they had received it.

This being the case, the question, "What constituted apostolic preaching, and wherein consists the strength and glory of primitive doctrine?" is of great consequence.

The message itself comprehended, chiefly, the subject of redemption. The whole essence of the Gospel is contained in many plain and simple enunciations: "*God hath visited and redeemed his people.*" (Luke i. 68.) "*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" (Gal. iv. 4, 5.) "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*" (2 Cor. v. 19.) He was "*made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" (2 Cor. v. 21.) Jesus is "*the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" (1 John ii. 2.) This doctrine constituted the great centre-truth of the apostolic system of teaching. In respect of its primary importance, its relative value and its position in the economy of salvation, all the first Preachers of Christianity, as well as St. Paul, may be said to have "*known nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*"

But around this one doctrine all other truth, in the evangelical economy, is found to radiate in beautiful harmony. From this point, the divine nature, attributes, counsels, will, and providence, are all seen, in their most glorious and encouraging aspects. The Son of God is, indeed, made palpable, speaks in human language, performs divine works in the sight of men, and then suffers and dies for sin. The occasional visitations of "*the Angel of the Covenant*" to the abodes of earth, and in the form of man, exercising a punitive power or condescending mercy, became, in the person of our Lord, a permanent resident in our nature. The long line of sacrifices, whether offered in patriarchal times or in the Jewish temple, having but a dim and obscure meaning, except to the faith of a few in different ages, now received their illustration when Jesus "*died once for all.*" The scattered rays of heavenly light and divine truth, which had evolved through the prophetic period and the several dispensations, were now concentrated in one great oracle, and could be announced in one sentence: "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (John iii. 16.)

From the same elevated region, the true character and destinies of man can alone be learned. The depth of his fall is best seen in the humiliation and sufferings by which he is saved; and the extent of his loss, in the number of blessings included in, as well as the price paid for, his redemption. The greatness of his pollution, the completeness of his ruin, the depth of his misery, together with his utter

helplessness, are all most clearly perceived in the fact, that he is "*washed, that he is sanctified, that he is justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*" (1 Cor. vi. 11.) But whilst the catastrophe of man's ruin is most vividly seen in connexion with the cross, so his highest happiness and glory are exhibited from the same point. Every thing in heaven and in earth is put in requisition to save and elevate man. When we imagine that all the provisions of Christianity are contained in a singular writing denominated "Scripture," otherwise than in covenant; and that all which is necessary to bring about our recovery and salvation, is mere instruction *on the part of God*, and *on ours* credence in its truth; we are much mistaken. That writing removes the veil thrown over the agencies of the invisible world; and now in its light we behold the Godhead putting forth his own infinite resources,—the Son leaving the Father's bosom,—the Holy Ghost descending,—angelic beings employed as ministering spirits,—the depths of eternity stirred,—inspiration given,—a divine government established,—different dispensations unrolled from the book of God's counsels,—Prophets appearing,—symbols and sacrifices ordained,—miracles performed,—mysterious and typical persons and events introduced on the stage of time. But all these point to, and terminate in, one great event, the CROSS; and that had but one end, the salvation of man.

It follows, that the doctrine of Christ crucified, preached by the primitive Evangelists, though one and isolated, yet, in its associated objects and issues, does not stand alone. It is the only sacrifice accepted of God, or regarded when he listens to the prayers of the penitent, or pardons the guilty; it is the only merit to which the troubled conscience and bleeding heart of the distressed in sin can turn for peace and rest; it is the fountain whence flow all the streams of grace and life found in the church; it is the great object to which all true teaching, Liturgical services, sacramental ordinances, and hymns of devotion, should direct the attention and feelings of men; in fine, it is the foundation-stone on which the spiritual building, whether existing on earth or in heaven, is erected.

But besides the cross being the only point where God meets man, it is found in experience, that it is the only power by which he can be softened and moved, so as to lead him to salvation. The ministry of the Apostles was powerful, in consequence of its being full of Christ. The same is the case in all times, and with all Ministers, however imperfect in other respects. In truth, with respect to God, the atonement is the only medium through which he can look upon man in love, grant him access in prayer, pardon his sins, and account him righteous; and then, with respect to man himself, it is the only object of "*faith towards God*" in which he can trust, because the only substitutional and vicarious merit available to him. There may,

indeed, be discovered in the Saviour's character, teaching, and sufferings, that which is calculated naturally to touch the human heart; and it is always found that the narrative of the crucifixion and of the tragic scenes of the passion, in the hands of Christian Preachers, moves the minds of men much more than any other subjects. But the power of the cross is not in its adaptation to excite the feelings, but to assuage the conscience, and give rest to the "*weary and heavy laden*" sinner. This is man's great want. Sin is leading him to his final doom; to ruin, to perdition. "*What must I do to be saved?*" is the question which, in a thousand forms, presses upon his heart. The great value of the doctrine of the atonement is found in the circumstance, that it is the answer—the only answer—to the inquiry. Here, then, we have the true and proper "*faith once delivered to the saints,*" in its object. It may be safely affirmed, in the midst of the disputes and controversies now so rife, that the ministry which most fully sets forth the glories of the Saviour in his cross and passion, and seeks to accomplish the designs and purposes of his death, is most identical with that of the primitive teachers of Christianity; and if so, it must be the most apostolical. Moreover, that church which most faithfully conserves this doctrine, exhibits it in its creeds, services, sermons, devotions, and active operations in the salvation of mankind, is most like the first churches, and, this being the case, must be most primitive in its foundation, spirit, and character.

3. In every aspect of the Gospel, faith only is represented as the appropriate instrument and condition of reception, whether for justification, or any other blessing.

It invites us to God, but tells us, at the same time, that "*without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. xi. 6.) It enjoins on us the duty of prayer; but it promises the answer only to those who believe. Our Lord, on this subject, says, "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*" (Matt. xxi. 22.) And again: "*And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*" (Mark xi. 22—24.)

The Gospel offers a present salvation to every man, including justification, adoption, and sanctification; and all this is by faith alone. "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time*

his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,.....seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." (Rom. iii. 25, 26, 28, 30.)

On the kindred blessing of adopting grace, we have similar language: "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John i. 11, 12.) "*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" (Gal. iii. 25—28.)

On the subject of the believer's sanctification, the means are more frequently adverted to than the instrument. And yet on this point, it is said, "*Purifying their hearts by faith.*" (Acts xv. 9.) The nature of the purity which is thus said to be received by faith, must be sought in a comparison of texts. If this method be adopted, it will be found that the sanctification of the heart is indicated by that expression, "*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" (2 Cor. vii. 1.) "*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (1 John i. 7—9.)

Thus, we find, that, in the "*analogy of faith*" as exhibited in the teaching of the Apostles, the belief of the truth, involving trust in the Saviour's death and merit, was the sole condition of salvation. We hear of no second principle; not even of any auxiliary or subsidiary condition. "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*" (Titus iii. 5.) "*For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) "*And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work.*" (Rom. xi. 6.)

This divine principle of faith would, of course, be connected with other movements of the mind; but all to issue in this one act of confidence in the Saviour's blood. When the hand is stretched out to receive a gratuity, many things are included in the act, though in the

ultimate result the hand only is engaged. All the curious mechanism of the body, and the powers of the mind, are supposed in the exercise of the simple act of receiving a charity. Mental anguish, a bleeding heart, a sense of suffering and want, the volitions of the will, and the intricate movements of the nervous and muscular systems, are all involved in the suppliant cry, and the outstretched arm; but it is the hand alone, finally, that receives the charitable relief. It is so in the case of faith. There must be a previous perception of the truth, a deep sense of sin, a penitent heart, the spirit of prayer, a turning to God from old habits of evil; but when the final closure with Christ takes place, it is faith—only faith—which lays hold of his precious merit, and justifies the soul.

4. No mental or moral exercise of the mind can possibly harmonize with the principles and provisions of the Gospel, but faith.

We instance in one doctrine,—the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. This, instead of being speculative and unimportant, is, in fact, the first and fundamental truth of the Gospel. The whole scheme of Christianity revolves on this great fact: yet it is evident, that the knowledge of this first truth must be limited to revelation; and, as a consequence, be embraced only as an article of faith. None can comprehend God in his essence, his mode of being, the personal distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and yet it is easy to perceive, that without this doctrine the whole fabric of Christianity must fall to the ground. The mystery of the incarnation must be involved in the question of the antecedent and eternal existence of the Son of God, who is represented as the "*brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;*" (Heb. i. 3;) as "*God manifest in the flesh;*" (1 Tim. iii. 16;) as "*the Word*" who "*was in the beginning with God, and was God;*" and yet "*was made flesh, and dwelt among us;*" and "*in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.*" (John i. 1, 14; Col. ii. 9.) How could this take place, unless the Son eternally existed in the bosom of the Father? Then, again, the whole sacrificial system of Christianity, together with all its collateral provisions and blessings, must rest in this mystery of the incarnation. The redemption-price, paid for our ransom and recovery, depended, for its value, merit, and efficacy, on the Deity of the suffering Saviour. The functions of the Holy Ghost in the Christian economy, are connected with the doctrine of the Trinity. How could he inspire the Prophets and Apostles, be poured out on the day of Pentecost, enlighten the ignorant in sin, convert the heart to God, bear witness, give life and love, and dwell with believers as their constant Comforter, unless he possessed personality and intelligence? That we cannot comprehend this holy verity, is no evidence that it is not one. In this, as in many other similar cases, the revelation of the truth *as a truth* is complete; whilst the subject to which it refers remains a mystery still.

But although the wisest of men cannot comprehend the mystery of the Trinity, and its collateral doctrines, the incarnation of Christ, and the personality and official functions of the Holy Spirit; yet all can be inducted into the faith of these great truths; and, moreover, faith is the only principle which can possibly meet the case. Doctrines which cannot be understood, because of their abstract, ethereal, and exalted nature, can, when revealed, be believed. Neither is this faith irrational or unsustained, when the oracle itself is proved to be divine. As a *fact*, any of the doctrines in question can be admitted by the mind, and all the economical and moral benefit intended be attained; whilst the metaphysics of the fact are far too distant and sublime for comprehension. This must be the case respecting the entire nature of God. No one can understand the first truth of the whole series relative to the Deity,—"*God is a Spirit*," any more than the Divine attributes in detail. Yet he can admit and believe the doctrine itself as unquestionable.

Hence, on this principle, the most barbarous, as well as the most refined races could be initiated into the faith of the Trinity, as well as the mysteries of the incarnation and atonement. This we know to have been the case, without any *reserve*. These great articles of the Christian faith, in primitive times, were taught to all. The elementary preaching of the Apostles embraced them; and great was the effect which such teaching produced. Their admission, in their force and grandeur, into the mind of even the most ignorant and besotted, transformed every thing, within and without, in possession and in prospect. The Saviour's sojourn in our flesh and in our world brings the human family into perfectly new relations; and the world, it is seen, is occupied and filled with God; not merely in his spiritual being, and in his supreme government, but as one with itself, clothed in the attire of flesh and blood, in contact with all its evils, sympathizing in all its woes, taking on himself the burden of its sins, and opening a beautiful, holy, and eternal intercourse between the material and the immaterial,—earth and heaven, between the apostate human race and their reconciled God and Father above. The eternal "*Son of God*," as such, comes down in the person of our Lord, to meet man in his own humble dwelling-place, to teach, to work miracles, to suffer and to die; and then the "*Son of man*," in the human nature, after the resurrection, ascended to heaven to hold high intercourse with God, and to establish an indissoluble and glorious fellowship betwixt the Deity on his throne, and man as redeemed. This doctrine, heartily received through faith, was of itself sufficient to draw men from their idolatry. Belief in the constantly-announced incarnation of "*Emmanuel, God with us*," broke the spell of superstition, by bringing even Pagans to "*know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent;*" and filled them with adoring joy at the discovery of the great love mani-

fested to them. This faith at once transformed the besotted idolater into a devout worshipper of the one true God; drew him from an erroneous confidence in his "*vain oblations,*" to trust in the "*one Lord;*" and presented to his mind an open door of access to a new, spiritual, and heavenly world.

We are speaking of the adaptation of faith only to the provisions of the Gospel. In further illustration of this point, we mention the scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace; that is, salvation as a free and undeserved gift. If any truth of the Bible can be said to be plain and clear, it is this. We are not now merely referring to the primary blessings of the Gospel, as founded in the gift and sacrifice of Christ; but on the bestowment of its privileges on individual man.

We ask, On what principle is this grant conferred? The answer is, That of grace. When the sorrowful penitent is justified, and released from his liability to suffer the just penalty due to his guilt, he is pardoned and accepted on the principle of spontaneous grace. When from this point of a first acceptance, other blessings are contemplated and sought, sanctification, and all the rights and joys of the spiritual life, the same rule is observed. Never, under any circumstances, or in any state, from the first awakening of the soul up to its highest attainable privileges in holiness, can any one claim the blessings of the Gospel on the ground of legal right. If so, then all these blessings must be of grace. Grace originated the gift of Christ; his redemption itself, to us, is infinite, unbounded, universal grace; the treatment of man on the principle and in the spirit of that redemption, (as in his calls, offer of repentance and pardon, visitations of the Holy Spirit, and long-suffering patience towards him in his sins,) is all of grace; and then, when the "*day of redemption draweth nigh,*" and salvation is experimentally given, the movement of God towards the sinner, the act by which he is justified, and the subsequent privileges of his state, are all of grace.

It follows from this, that faith alone must be the proximate instrument of salvation. Nothing else answers to the doctrine of a gratuitous justification; and hence, whenever the twin truths of grace and faith are held at all, they are held together. Truth is always consistent with itself. Having in tender and unbounded grace provided for the free forgiveness and salvation of the human race, the consistent and harmonious condition of its reception is faith. The first—salvation by grace—was the new, the heart-cheering, the sublime and glorious, oracle set up in the primitive church. This truth, so important in itself, was not exhibited in apostolical teaching as a beautiful abstraction, a mere principle, a remote and distant settlement in the decrees of God. In this sense the most cold and legal theologians will often allow, that salvation is of grace. But, although they often accede to the general proposition, they take care to set up

an intervening power, in the form of conditions, duties, penances, sufferings, sacraments, and ceremonies, so as effectually to neutralize the benefit. By these devices, though grace is allowed to be the primary movement in the mind of God, in the arrangements of the Gospel dispensation, yet, in the successive stages of its manifestation, from the throne above to the heart of the sinner, it becomes (in consequence of being received first through one medium and then through another, all having their separate conditions and ceremonies) no grace at all, but rather a system of legal observances. No objection is taken to the idea of this being the spring-head of the blessings of the Gospel, in the divine purpose, if the benefit may be modified by these parties themselves. Put the grace of God under ecclesiastical restraint, and then there is no objection to the doctrine. Let this blessing flow through the sacraments, and these be limited in their validity to a particular priesthood, and that priesthood stand on a self-defined succession; then, on this ground, there can be no objection to the doctrine in question.

The series of arrangements in the theory under consideration are, first, grace in God as the origin and cause of man's salvation; then the sacraments of the church, the channels and *media* of this grace; then the sacerdotal order, *in their line only*, as the parties into whose hands these sacraments are intrusted; then the imposition of such terms on the communicants as they think proper, under the notion of "*worthily receiving;*" and then on these conditions the poor sinner is permitted to receive grace. This, it is evident, is a fearful departure from the manner in which the divine mercy was exhibited in apostolic times. It was grace, not put under the *surveillance* of man, but freely, directly, and immediately exercised. The primitive doctrine pointed the inquiring penitent to God as the author of his salvation; not by a circuitous route of forms and works, but *now*, at once. "*This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.*" (2 Cor. vi. 2.) The divine grace, as set forth in the sacred writings, is not merely a plan, a scheme, a counsel, or the harmonious operation of all these, to produce some merciful result for the advantage of man. In addition to this, it is described as a gift, an act, an operation, a power; and all instant and direct. "*Being justified by grace.*" How? "*It is God that justifieth.*" "*By grace are ye saved through faith.*" In what way? "*It is the gift of God.*" (Titus iii. 7; Rom. viii. 33; Eph. ii. 8.)

All the concurrent blessings of a state of salvation are spoken of as being of this nature. "*Be ye reconciled* TO *God.*" (2 Cor. v. 20.) "*We have peace* WITH *God.*" (Rom. v. 1.) "*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*" (Rom. v. 5.) "*The disciples were filled with joy and* WITH *the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts xiii. 52.) The kingdom of God is

not meat and drink," (Jewish or Christian sacrifices or ceremonies,) "*but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*" (Rom. xiv. 17.) "*Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*" (Rom. vi. 14.) "*Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life.*" (Rom. v. 21.) These are the kind of expressions constantly employed to designate divine grace in its different aspects. How remote is this from the idea of grace lodged in what is called the church, to be doled out in some unintelligible manner, on terms of her own! By this notion, God, in the infinitude of his love, the riches of his mercy, and his readiness to hear prayer and save mankind, is thrown into a dim, obscure, and mysterious distance, having no direct concern in the great business of the sinner's salvation. But, on the other—the apostolic—mode of teaching, he is brought nigh, and through Christ is seen to "*give ear to prayer,*" to "*stretch out his hand to save,*" to "*pardon iniquity, transgression, and sin;*" in an inexpressible "*manner of love*" "*to call*" all true believers "*sons of God,*" to admit them, thus saved, to dwell in love and in God; for "*God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*" This is the grace of God, a sovereign and immediate exercise of the divine love and power in the free bestowment of the privileges of experimental religion, as promised in the Gospel; the gift of the Holy Ghost in the renewal and sanctification of the soul; and all the light, joy, and consolation of the spiritual life.

Faith is the only fitting instrument of receiving this blessing, thus immediately conferred by the hand of God. So we find it set forth in the New Testament. When other conditions are insisted upon, they will sufficiently indicate, at once, that salvation by grace, properly considered, has been abandoned. Nothing can bring the guilty sinner to God for the pardon of sin, or for any other blessing, as an act of grace, but faith. If, in his prayers and religious exercises, he seeks to open up a negotiation on the principle of compromise; (that is, that God should abate some portions of his threatenings, on the ground that he, the suppliant, should in future amend his ways, and do God better service;) or if, on the other hand, in the mind and feelings of this person, the transaction should assume the form of a commercial and conditional interchange betwixt himself and God; then, in either of these cases, there can be no room for faith. The question then becomes altogether one of service and wages. Now, that this is not in the spirit of the New Testament, must be evident. Had God designed to save the world by the enactments of law, the costly provisions of redemption might have been spared. How could that be accomplished, when, in fact, all men are transgressors of that law? The design of the Christian dispensation was, clearly, to develope a perfectly different truth; namely, that God had estab-

lished an immutable economy of grace; that salvation should be a free gift, and all its privileges and blessings conferred as a gratuity; and, besides, that faith alone should be the condition. The one beautifully harmonizes with the other, and both with the sinful state of human nature. How can a guilty criminal be saved otherwise than by grace? And what can he do in his condition but "*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*," that he may "*be saved?*"

3. Whilst dwelling on the harmony of faith with the provisions of the Gospel, it may be as well, thirdly, to consider the question in relation to the cross and atonement of Christ.

We hear the Apostle exclaiming, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;*" (Gal. vi. 14;) and, "*I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*" (1 Cor. ii. 2, 5.) And again: "*We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) This is the uniform language of all the Apostles. The death of Christ is set forth in their preaching as an "*atonement;*" a "*propitiation;*" a "*sacrifice to God;*" "*a redemption-price;*" "*an offering for sin.*"

This blood of the Saviour is ever laid at the foundation of the entire scheme of experimental Christianity. It is the only merit and righteousness, on the ground of which Almighty God deals with man on all the subjects of his salvation, listens to his prayers, accepts his faith, pardons his transgressions, accounts him righteous, takes him into favour and fellowship, and invests him with the title to eternal life. This sacrificial blood is that fountain, which, when applied by the blessed Spirit, is represented as "*washing away sin,*" as well as "*opening a new and living way into the holiest;*" terms which indicate that sanctification is not a mere habit, produced by the combined influence of pre-existing principles of piety, or attained by sacraments and means, but a grace wrought in the soul through the atonement.

The sacrifice of Christ is also represented as the foundation of the mediatorial throne, and constitutes the formal plea of our great High Priest's intercession. The Gospel, as taught by the Apostles, is full of this great topic. The atonement meets us at every point, not in mysterious and reserved enigmas, types, and forms, which all belonged to the departed dispensation, but as a great and literal truth. All that God is seen to do in the exercise of mercy, the diffusion of his Holy Spirit, the bestowment of privileges, and the inspirations of sacred joy, is through the blood of the covenant. All that is required from man, whether on his first approach to the

mercy-seat, or in all his subsequent exercises of faith and piety, has reference to the sacrifice of Christ. This doctrine of our Christianity, as set forth by its first teachers, is not only exhibited as one truth amongst many, of transcendent value and importance, but as the grand central verity of the entire system, connecting itself with every other vital doctrine, so as even to give it all its value and efficacy. Besides, it is necessary to perceive all this, in order to a right apprehension of the true Gospel, and the exercise of saving faith.

Let the mind fail to believe the atonement in any of the required acts of piety, and then, not being "*of faith*," they can be of no avail before God. Suppose the ambassador of Christ be deficient in a clear, full, broad exhibition of the death of Christ, for the sins of the world; would the message be the Gospel? Or, if this doctrine were faithfully preached, and the auditory failed to "*behold Christ, so evidently set forth, crucified amongst them;*" would their hearing be "*in faith, to the saving of the soul?*" If, again, public prayers were offered up, either in a Liturgy or otherwise, and he who presented the supplications of the congregation to God neglected, or from a spiritual blindness was unable, to recognise, appreciate, and plead the atonement; would such prayers avail to avert the divine wrath, draw down blessings, and secure the gift of the Holy Spirit? But, more: in case the sacrament of the Lord's supper is administered, according to the most approved forms, and yet both the administrator and the recipients be incapable, for want of faith, to *show forth the Lord's death*," and spiritually to eat "*the Lord's body and drink his blood;*" is it conceivable that the grace of this sacrament can be attained? The atonement is not simply laid in the hidden counsels of God, as the basis on which he chooses to bestow all grace; but it is made the object of faith to the sinner in every service and exercise of religion. Every thing, however exact in order, is defective in its absence. It is, in truth, "*the alpha and the omega, the first and the last*," in the matter, connected with our salvation. Even the law could be of no avail without the death of Christ. It could not have force as a rule of holiness and obedience, for the simple reason, that it would be impracticable through the sin and infirmity of man. It could be of no value as a remedy for the guilt of man, because in its mere precepts and commands we have nothing saving. But all this is changed, when viewed in connexion with the sacrifice of the cross, and the grace which follows. It is then a "*schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*" (Gal. iii. 24.) In like manner the Gospel, as a mere revelation of great truths, of light and information, could not, without the atonement, lead to any saving result. The disease and misery of man is not intellectual privation: it is a moral malady, the disease of sin. But then sin is an offence against God, a transgres-

[illegible] salvation should be a [illegible] blessings conferred as a gra[illegible] condition. The [illegible] with the holy and [illegible] with the sinful [illegible]. How can a guilty criminal be saved otherwise than [illegible] this way can he be in his condition but [illegible] he may be saved?"

2. We [illegible] the harmony of Christ with the provisions of [illegible] to be [illegible] to examine the question in [illegible] the [illegible] of Christ.

We have [illegible] "God forbid that I should glory, [illegible] cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14;) and, "I [illegible] to know [illegible] among you, save Jesus Christ, and [illegible] and that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of [illegible]." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) And again: "We [illegible] unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto [illegible] but unto them which are called, both Jews and [illegible] Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) This is the uniform language of all the Apostles. The cross of Christ is set forth in their preaching as an "atonement," a "propitiation," a "sacrifice to God;" "a redemption[illegible] for sin."

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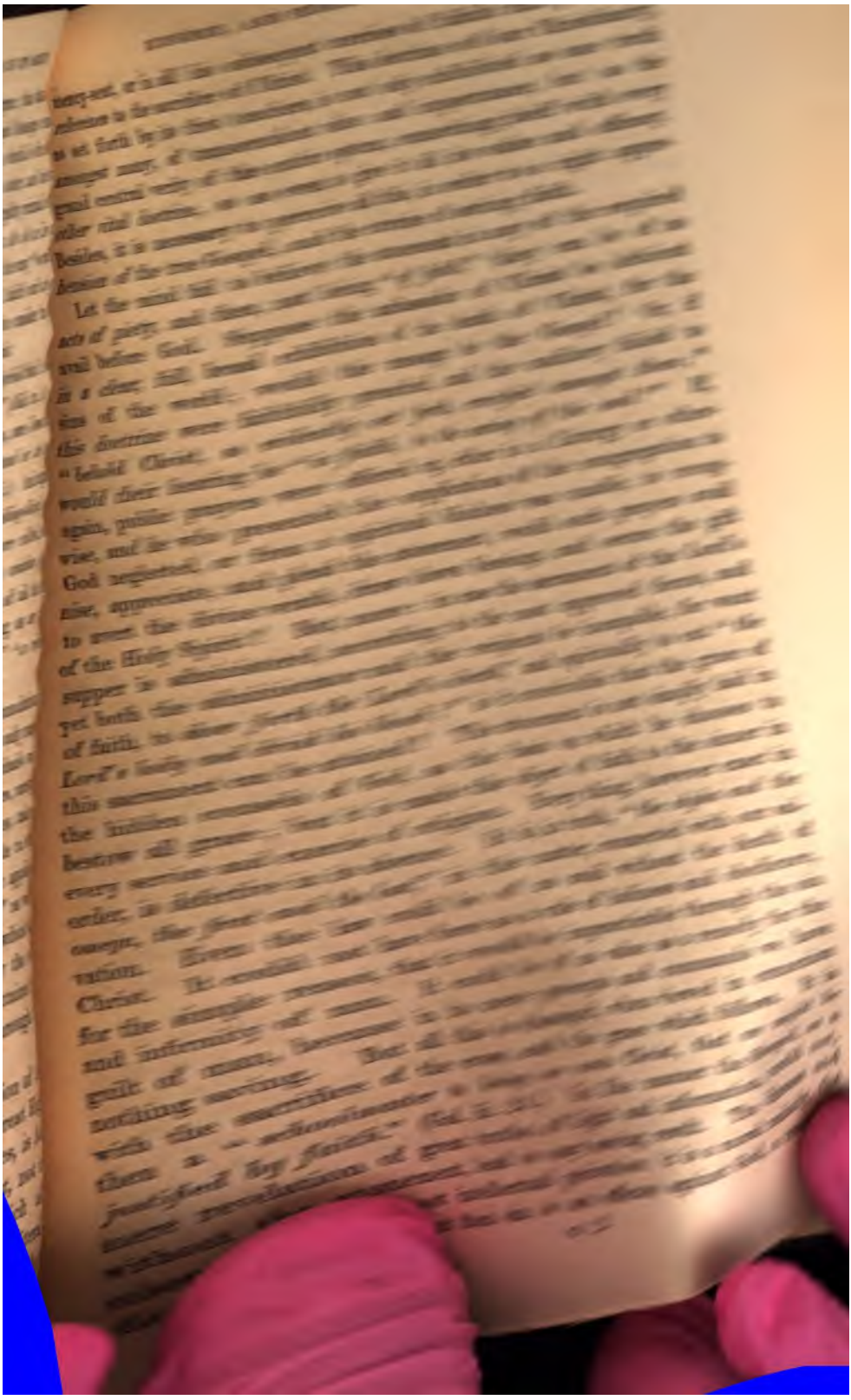

sion of his law, the pollution and ruin of the soul, the deep-seated fountain and spring of all evil acts and habits. And this, again, implies guilt, and an exposure to eternal damnation. What instruction could reach this case? Light, however full, and teaching, however profound, could only aggravate the misery of such a state by the revelation of its dreadful importance; whilst the danger would be altogether untouched. But the atonement, connected with this light, entirely alters its character. The revelation of our own corrupt, miserable, guilty, and dangerous state then becomes of the nature of a mercy, because, instead of a perplexity and cause of irritation, it is seen, that, "*we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.*" (Eph. i. 7.) Moreover, the higher revelation of God, and his glorious dwelling-place in heaven, surrounded by blessed beings, the happy subjects of his eternal kingdom, when viewed in the light of the cross of our Lord, becomes attractive and joyful. His anger is propitiated, his wrath is turned aside, his throne is a throne of love; he is accessible, even here, to faith and prayer, and hereafter to the disembodied spirit in vision and glory. All other lessons of knowledge are vitally affected by this truth. Place the cross in the centre of the most glowing and exalted pictures of spiritual happiness, and they all become vivid realities; without it, painted baubles. "*The blood of the covenant,*" placed by the side of the most difficult obligations and duties of holiness, makes the whole practicable and easy; whilst its absence from this branch of the truth renders it utterly ineffective. Let the "*Lamb that was slain*" be present in the darkest scenes of this world, and then the most burdensome crosses, afflictions; privations, and miseries—even to imprisonment and the martyr's grave—are possible, and may be made joyful. If the atonement is not every truth in one, yet it is essential to the value and vitality of every other doctrine.

4. This faith the Apostles sought to establish universally.

They bore the doctrine of the crucifixion into the temple, where Jesus had taught, and performed his miracles; into the hall where he had been arraigned and condemned; to Calvary, where he had died. They proclaimed the efficiency of his blood to wash away sin to the multitudes who had clamoured to shed it, taken pleasure in the agonies of the sufferer, and participated in the guilt of his murder; they preached it, as the means of peace and reconciliation, to the distracted and agitated authorities, the sceptical and divided nation then filling up the measure of its iniquities; and held out hope, through it, of continued mercy from God to his ancient people. But they did not stop at Jerusalem. They confronted the polished philosophers of Athens with the story of the crucifixion, and the doctrine of the resurrection; they entered into the voluptuous regions of Antioch, and turned the hopes and fears of the Christian doctrine

against the tide of sensual dissipation; they nobly met the Cæsars at the head of their martial hosts, with no other weapon in the unequal contest than the cross; they visited the imperial city itself, and planted this tree of life in the midst of its numerous, rich, powerful, but idolatrous population; they built the Christian altar by the side of the fanes of superstition, and challenged its priesthood and its devotees to the trial of the divinity and saving efficiency of the truth they taught; and, repudiating all human distinctions on religious questions, they proclaimed the same "*blood of sprinkling*" to the slaves of the lords of the world, and the barbarians of the provinces. They trusted not in the natural adaptation of this doctrine for effects;—and yet such adaptation exists;—but they relied on its Divinity. They had received their commission from God their Saviour: this was sufficient for them: it stood in the place of demonstration, as to the fitness of such a doctrine to save the world; and they knew that a commission which bore the sign-manual of the Godhead could neither be untrue nor ineffective.

The effect was one. It brought all the believers in Christ to salvation. But although the grace was to all the same in character and privilege, and, in its purely spiritual effects, identical; yet the fruits were multitudinous and diversified. The lofty were brought low, and the poor exalted; "*the wise in their own conceits*" were made foolish, and the ignorant and brutish were taught wisdom; the free in pleasure and sin were "*placed under the law to Christ,*" and the enslaved to Satan were made free in the Lord; those who had imagined themselves near, the elect, the chosen seed, the children of Abraham, found themselves afar off, and those who were really so were "*made nigh by the blood of Christ;*" the self-righteous, who considered themselves deified by innate virtues, saw their idols dethroned and expelled, and, becoming "*poor in spirit, were made rich.*" In fine, wherever the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ was proclaimed in its own unadorned simplicity, there the true Christian faith sprang up in its evidences of divinity and power, irrespective of the nation, the prejudices, the moral state, and the superstition and ignorance of the people.

We linger about the cross: how should it be otherwise? Talk of primitive doctrine! this is primitive doctrine; the first in the order of time, as preached by the Apostles after they had received "*power from on high,*"—"*the promised gift of the Father;*" the first in importance in that "analogy of faith" which they so richly, fully, and perfectly taught; the first economically, as the instrument in all their labours to found the church and to convert the world.

The primitive Christians were believers in this grand truth; and their spiritual privileges and immortal hopes rested upon it. By its energizing force upon the mind, and, through that, upon society, all

that we witness in ancient times was wrought. Like a fire, it melted down in its progress all fond conceits, philosophical theories, mythological systems, superstitious worship, and unreal sacrifices; and then planted in their place the temple of God, adorned in all truth and holiness, into which the tribes and nations of the world eagerly pressed to do homage to the "*Man of sorrows.*" Till unmeaning superstitions took the place of the true doctrine of the cross, it was omnipotent. It taught the guilty to find rest to their weary and afflicted spirits; in its mercy and merit, it established an open way of access to God on the one hand, and a medium through which he could display his grace and love on the other; it constituted a channel through which the effusions of the Holy Spirit might be poured forth upon the world; it exerted an ameliorating, softening, and healing influence on human society; it broke down, wherever received, the enmities and ferocities of man against man, by producing a new creation after the image of God; and, moreover, it founded a religious brotherhood amongst men, a new family of God, consisting of all races, kindreds, ranks, and colours. This is faith in the cross; and these are some of its results.

Now the true subject of investigation at this point, is,

II. WHETHER IT HAS PLEASED ALMIGHTY GOD TO MAKE OUR DOCTRINES AND ORDINANCES THE MEANS OF PRODUCING A LIVING FAITH, IN AGREEMENT WITH THAT OF PRIMITIVE TIMES.

It is scarcely necessary to remark here, that this has been regarded as a vital question from the beginning. Directly or indirectly, the whole principle and plan of Methodism, in its origin, progress, and standing, turns on the doctrine of faith. Not "*the faith,*" as articles of religion merely; which view of the case has usually occupied the attention of controversialists in their debates as to whether they and others were true churches, or the contrary. This point has not been neglected. The truth has been regarded as essential, as the foundation of the church, and also as the only authorized means of the spread of religion. But, in union with the desire to secure the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, a main object, and indeed the chief and leading purpose of all that has been attempted, has been, the spread of a living and experimental faith, with its fruits and results. It has ever been held as an axiom not to be controverted, that when the doctrines of Scripture are proclaimed, and acted upon, by a professedly Christian church, in their own legitimate spirit, they must be sanctioned by the blessing of God, accomplish the end for which they are given, and lead, as a consequence, to the spiritual life and salvation of all who believe. For the sake of distinctness, it may be remarked,

1. That Methodism was originated, and its distinctive characteristics were created, by the experimental adoption of this principle.

The leading features of this great religious movement, in the beginning, related to certain assigned *effects* of faith. It was a successful attempt to carry out, into living reality, the blessings which are found in the word of God to be connected with its descriptions of "*the belief of the truth.*" The point from whence its operations began was the present, conscious, divinely attested, salvation of man by faith. This doctrine was the seed of the harvest which followed, the germinant power whence it grew, and has hitherto been the leaven of its increase and the means of its prosperity. Unlike most other revivals of religion, it had not its rise in an attempted reformation of existing creeds, or in the formation of ecclesiastical canons and church-orders, but in preaching the cross of Christ, and a vehement invitation to lost sinners to "*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The case of the Founders of Methodism personally, is, in this point of view, deeply interesting.

It is known that the two Wesleys obtained evangelical faith about the same time, and under peculiar circumstances; moreover, that though their ministry did not originate in this change, or at this period,—for they had received holy orders some time previously, and exercised their ministry most laboriously,—yet the spiritual work of God, of which they were the instruments, took its rise from this circumstance, and began with the personal faith and experimental enjoyments of these two eminent servants of God. No sooner had they attained justification and assurance, than they began to proclaim them abroad, as "*upon the house-top,*" to all within the sphere of their influence. Learning, purity, zeal, self-denial, charity, and ministerial labours, of the most gigantic nature, distinguished these eminent men before; but, being destitute of these blessings, they had no power for usefulness, beyond a general impression and service rendered to an ecclesiastical system.

The elder of the brothers, and the leader of the work, has traced his own case in the most graphic and touching manner. On his return from America he says: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why, (what I least of all expected,) that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. '*I am not mad,*' though I thus speak; but '*I speak the words of truth and soberness;*' if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am, so are they." "This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth,—that I am fallen short of the glory of God; that my '*whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable;*' and, consequently, my whole life; seeing it cannot be, that an '*evil tree*' should '*bring forth good fruit;*' that '*alienated*' as I am '*from the*

life of God,' I am '*a child of wrath,*' an heir of hell; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins which are more in number than the hairs of my head; that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide his righteous judgment; that '*having the sentence of death*' in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope, but that of being justified freely, '*through the redemption that is in Jesus:*' I have no hope, but that, if I seek, I shall find Christ, and be found in him, '*not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*'

"If it be said, that I have faith, (for many such things have I heard, from many miserable comforters,) I answer, So have the devils, —a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the Apostles had even at Cana of Galilee, when Jesus first '*manifested forth his glory;*' even then they, in a sort, believed on him: but they had not then '*the faith that overcometh the world.*' The faith I want is, 'a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.' I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans; that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, '*I live not; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*' I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it; (though many imagine they have it, who have it not;) for whosoever hath it, is '*freed from sin,*' the whole '*body of sin is destroyed*' in him: he is freed from fear, having '*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.*' And he is freed from doubt, having '*the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;*' which '*Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God.*'"

Speaking of his views and state at the time above referred to, he again remarks: "In my return to England, January, 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining a true, living faith, was the '*one thing needful*' for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again: I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought, I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ, (which is but one,) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending

it, 'Dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness;' I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore, I disputed with all my might, and laboured to prove that faith might be where these were not; especially where the sense of forgiveness was not: for, all the scriptures relating to this, I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all Presbyterians who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw, no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness, and not *feel* it. But I felt it not. If then there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once."

After further describing his various inquiries and exercises on the subject, Mr. Wesley refers to the period and circumstances of his attainment of faith. "In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, when one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given *me*, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

This is the point whence our work, in its divine, its saving, and its vitally powerful character began: it is "*the work of faith.*" This gift and its attendant blessings being attained by both the Wesleys, their "*word was in power;*" sinners trembled under the sense of its searching light; and soon great numbers found the "*pearl of great price.*" This experimental faith and salvation stood variously connected with the origination of our cause.

From this time they began properly to preach the Gospel. They had laboured with all their energy and ability to establish the "*righteousness of the law.*" They beheld the fulness of the divine command requiring holiness and obedience; and by various modes—as fasting, prayer, weekly communion, diligent attention to all the ordinances of the Lord's house, self-denial and mortification, together with the visitation of the sick, and other acts of charity—sought to obey this law, and attain to the required purity; and that which they observed themselves, they diligently taught to others. In addition to this, they soared into mystic regions, and, by various mental exercises, sought to ingraft these principles and tastes on their active habits of practical piety and devotion. But all this time they neither knew nor preached the doctrines of the new covenant. Like all men destitute of personal and experimental faith, they never thought of offering pardon to the guilty through the alone merits of Jesus Christ.

Nothing short of this is the Gospel. Guilty, helpless, and ruined

man can only be saved from his condemnation by a free justification, and from the depravity of his nature by the new birth. Whatever else men may preach, if their ministry does not include these great provisions of divine grace, their message is defective or false. How evangelical effects can be expected in the absence of evangelical truth, it is difficult to imagine; and it is most certain that they are never found. This was the fact with these eminent men. Their zeal and talents made an impression, but did not save souls. Many were attracted, delighted, or offended, as the case might be; but none were led to the Lord Jesus Christ, none were constituted new creatures, none attained either to the joy or the purity of the Christian character. How, indeed, should it be so, when the instrument they employed was not the doctrine of the cross? But no sooner had they attained to faith themselves, than they saw the true nature and substance of the Gospel; and, instead of preaching old and ineffective dogmas, gathered from "the traditions of the fathers," the schools of the moralists, and the reveries of the Mystics, they drew their doctrine, fresh and full, from the sacred oracles, and nobly and broadly set forth "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*" The perplexities through which they had passed showed them the necessity of precision and simplicity. Hence they not only taught the truth, but studiously stripped it of all external and adventitious appendages, and exhibited it in all its force and power, because in its own unmixed purity and massive greatness. In fact, the success of Methodism began, where success must always begin, in the preaching of the true Gospel. Thus the personal faith of the leaders of the work stood connected with the work itself, just as the conversion of St. Paul was associated with his mission to the Gentiles, and as the attainment of evangelical views and enjoyments by the Reformers were identified with the churches they established, and with the Articles and Liturgies they provided for the edification of the people.

It is a well-established fact, that the human intellect is perfectly insufficient of itself to apprehend the spiritual and saving nature of Christianity. Men without the Spirit are without the faculty to understand or to teach the Gospel. They may possess great learning, acuteness, mental power, and eloquence; they may manifest equal zeal, industry, self-denial, and charity; they may labour with the utmost sincerity in the support, vindication, and extension of an ecclesiastical system; and yet, if without conversion to God, it will not be the Gospel they preach; and, strange to say, they will be ignorant of the defect. Hence, the great change which now took place in the state of the Founders of Methodism, had the effect of opening their eyes to a true knowledge of the Christian dispensation itself, and, consequently, led to its adoption as the only legitimate

means of bringing the lost and profligate masses of mankind to a knowledge of salvation.

But the effect of this great change was not only to enable them to comprehend the Gospel in its substance, but to give them the power to teach the manner of its attainment. Up to this time they had been, as Mr. Wesley says, "*beating the air.*" Strenuous, even to severity, in urging all to whom they had the opportunity of preaching, or otherwise addressing, to observe, even to the letter, all the Canons, Rubrics, and ascetic rules they could possibly discover, however obsolete in practice, in the discipline of the Church; they failed in teaching the evangelical way of "*repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Their principles and feelings would have admirably fitted them to found some new religious or monastic order; and, by the force of their example, and the severity of their morality, to attract, consolidate, and build up a numerous society. But with the new views and feelings which they attained at this period, instead of expending their energies in creating a system which might symbolize with the ancient monastic orders, they felt that they were in possession of *a power* which might be employed amongst the "*chief of sinners,*" in diffusing the blessed privileges of divine grace. From this elevation, a new light, and a new world, burst on their astonished minds. The nations of sinful men lay before them in their helpless ignorance and guilt; but they now saw that they were redeemed by the blood of the cross: and the sight not only awakened feelings of pity and love unfelt before, but, with the evidence of their own salvation by simple faith, which they then enjoyed in all its freshness, they also felt that they possessed the means of leading others to the same state of salvation, and also that the progress of such a work need not be limited to time or place. The conviction rested on them with all the force of a divine demonstration, that to hide their "*light under a bushel*" would be criminal. With all their predilections in favour of elegant scholarship, and a University life, they did not dare to continue in this honourable seclusion; and, breaking through every attraction, they rushed into every "*open door,*" to make known the way of salvation by faith. This was the burden of their message. Having only one thing to seek,—the present salvation of sinners, and knowing that there is only one method of enjoying this blessing, they employed no modes of finesse, or abstruse and complicated policy, to accomplish their purpose. With a directness which only such a feeling can inspire, they every where proclaimed Christ, and urged upon all the privilege of embracing in him a present state of pardon, acceptance, and peace with God.

We find no theoretic doctrine of preparation essential to success; no plans of moral or social amelioration put in operation; no *normal*

schools of training established to educate sinners into a capacity and fitness to be saved; no refined methods of improving the intellect, and polishing the manners of the rude barbarians to be sought and converted, adopted. Nothing of this kind appears. With entire confidence in the independent sufficiency of "*the Gospel*," as "*the power of God unto salvation*," we behold the messengers of mercy take their stand in the midst of listening thousands, in the open air; and whilst they are declaring the glad tidings of salvation, many, who came in ignorance, indifference, and often in scorn and derision, were arrested in their career of sin, brought into a penitent state, and, before the close of the service, by faith in the Saviour, entered into liberty, and found the peace and favour of God. Thus the acquisition of faith, in the case of our Founders, enabled them, not merely to teach the Gospel as an abstract truth, but to employ it as a mighty instrument for the recovery of man to the favour and image of God. Hence, besides the individual justification of these great men, two consequences arose out of their attainment of saving faith, in connexion with the work of which they were the instruments: it inducted them into a true perception of the Gospel itself, and prepared them to teach all other men the way of attaining its blessings.

2. The unanimity with which the doctrine of *salvation by faith only* was adopted as the basis of the operation of the united ministry of the body, must be also considered.

In the first Conference ever held, this became the chief subject of consideration. It is stated that, "after some time spent in prayer, the design of our meeting was proposed; namely, to consider, (1.) What to teach; and, (2.) What to do; that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.

"We began by considering the doctrine of justification: the questions relating to which, with the substance of the answers given thereto, were as follows:—

"(1.) What is it to be justified? To be pardoned, and received into God's favour, into such a state, that if we continue therein, we shall be finally saved. (2.) Is faith the condition of justification? Yes; for every one who believeth not is condemned; and every one who believes is justified. (3.) But must not repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before this faith? Without doubt; if by repentance you mean conviction of sin; and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off evil, doing good, and using his ordinances according to the power we have received. (4.) What is faith? Faith in general is a divine, supernatural *elenchos* of things not seen; that is, of past, future, or spiritual things. It is a spiritual sight of God, and the things of God. First, a sinner is convinced, by the Holy Ghost,

'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' This is that faith by which he is justified or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, 'Thou art pardoned; thou hast redemption in his blood.' And this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. (5.) Have all Christians this faith? May not a man be justified, and not know it? That all true Christians have such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love, appears from Rom. viii. 15; Eph. iv. 32; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Heb. viii. 10; 1 John iv. 10; v. 19. And that no man can be justified, and not know it, appears farther from the nature of the thing. For faith after repentance, is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness. It appears also from the immediate, as well as distant, fruits thereof. (6.) But may not a man go to heaven without it? It does not appear from holy writ, that a man who hears the Gospel can, (Mark xvi. 16,) whatever a Heathen may do. (Rom. ii. 14.) (7.) What are the immediate fruits of justifying faith? Peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down inward sin. (8.) Does any one believe, who has not the witness in himself, or any longer than he sees, loves, and obeys God? We apprehend not; *seeing God* being the very essence of faith; love and obedience the inseparable properties of it. (9.) What sins are consistent with justifying faith? No *wilful* sin. If a believer *wilfully sins*, he casts away his faith. Neither is it possible he should have *justifying faith again*, without previously *repenting*. (10.) Must every believer come into a state of doubt, or fear, or darkness? Will he do so, unless by ignorance or unfaithfulness? Does God otherwise withdraw himself? It is certain, a believer *need* never again come into condemnation. It seems, he need not come into a state of doubt, or fear, or darkness; and that (ordinarily, at least) he *will not*, unless by ignorance or unfaithfulness. Yet it is true, that the first joy does seldom last long; that it is commonly followed by doubts and fears; and that God frequently permits great heaviness, before any large manifestation of himself. (11.) Are works necessary to the continuance of faith? Without doubt; for a man may forfeit the free gift of God, either by sins of omission or commission. (12.) Can faith be lost, but for the want of works? It cannot but through disobedience. (13.) How is faith made *perfect by works?* The more we exert our faith, the more it is increased. To him that hath shall be given. (14.) St. Paul says, Abraham *was not* justified by works; St. James, he *was* justified by works. Do they not contradict each other? No. (i.) Because they do not speak of the same justification. St. Paul speaks of that justification which was when Abraham was seventy-five years old, above twenty years before Isaac was born; St. James, of that justification which was when he offered up Isaac on the altar. (ii.) Because they do not speak of the

same works; St. Paul speaking of the works which precede faith; St. James, of works which spring from it."

These questions indicate the fact, that this system began, not in a theoretic, but an experimental, faith; and this, it is seen, was made the basis of the plan of operations then determined upon. This is certainly identical with primitive Christianity. During the life of the Apostles, and indeed down to the close of the sacred canon, we hear of nothing but religion in an experimental form. Christianity was then a class of great truths, and its disciples were taught to embody its blessings in their own hearts. Christians, at the period in question, possessed no external power; and they sought not to commend their cause to the acceptance of the world, by any motives drawn from considerations of church order and economy. They addressed themselves to the heart. They bore in their commission the means of salvation, and they made the offer: this was the case with our fathers. Like the first teachers of the Gospel, they began their work where all evil has its seat, the inmost soul. Their object was not to rear an external fabric, but by working from the outer to the inner man,—from the forms and shadows in which men were entrenched,—to treat with them on the subject of a vital faith in Christ, and pardon through his blood.

We are taunted with the popish objection to the Reformation: "Where was your religion before Luther?" This is repeated, in spirit and substance, at least. The answer is, In the Bible: and the first act of the awakened mind of our Founder and his coadjutors, was to abandon every human rule of faith, and adopt the word of God alone. They fled from their old, shattered, and ineffective confidence in ecclesiastical authority, and rested exclusively in the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. After discovering the sufficiency of this in their own case, they sought to make it the sole foundation of the work in which they were engaged.

In the first instance, Methodism in its organized form was nothing more nor less than the union of a few Ministers, for the purpose of recognising the Bible as the foundation of their faith, and taking counsel with each other as to the best method of propagating the truth they had found. They felt that the Gospel of the blessed God possessed an absolute supremacy; that it could not, innocently, be made subordinate to the laws of man. They knew, by a divine persuasion, as well as by the testimony of their hearts, that it was their duty to hold this deposit as from God, to consider themselves as "*stewards of the mysteries of his kingdom;*" that they were accountable, chiefly and primarily, to the Head of the church, from whom alone they had received the double grace,—salvation, and a call to the ministry; were bound, under the penalty of His malediction, to "*preach the faith*" they once, in effect and

practice, attempted "*to destroy.*" They would gladly have built their work on the old foundations, had they been permitted; and fulfilled the commission which they had received, within the existing ecclesiastical limits of the national Church. But, this not being the case, they considered themselves obliged to "*hold fast their divine vocation,*" and make the truth known, as was done by its first teachers, in its own naked and unadorned simplicity, and beyond the line and limits of any prescribed order.

The whole question respecting the lawfulness of this movement terminates in this, namely, whether the divine commission given to these holy men was, in its nature, subordinate to human authority, or absolute, and consequently binding, irrespective of this authority. The principle, we grant, is as applicable, whichever way the truth may lie, to others as to them. It is evident from facts, that our fathers felt the truth to be absolute; that they had no choice as to their own duty, and were obliged to consider the Gospel, both in its own nature and their holding it, as supreme in itself. Were they in error, or did they judge wisely in this? The case is a plain one. They had obtained an experimental faith, and thus acquired a religious fitness; they were "*moved by the Holy Ghost*" to take upon them the holy ministry, and thus possessed an official call. They had, through the spiritual light which they obtained, gained a clear knowledge of the Gospel itself, and were qualified to teach it; they were urged by the vows of God, which were upon them, to a faithful discharge of their great duty. Besides, they saw clearly that the state of the world around them made it necessary that this saving truth should be plainly and generally taught, or otherwise the people must perish in their sins. But at this point, ecclesiastical laws and authority interposed to prevent the general proclamation of that which they knew to be divine truth; and the question arose, as to the weight of obligation imposed upon them by their divine vocation, and also the nature of that authority and those rules by which they were obstructed in their course. In striking the balance, they concluded rightly, that religion—in its own divinity being from God, in its inspired records being full and perfect, and in its Head (Jesus Christ, as the Lord of his own kingdom) supreme—could not be subordinated to an economy which, in its canons, was only human; in fine, that the divine, the moral, the saving, and consequently absolute, claims of the Gospel are transcendently above the conditional obedience which must be given to the authority of man, when applied to the subject of religion. When the alternative came practically before them for consideration,—whether it was their duty to obey that divine and speaking principle of faith within them, which was no other than the voice of God; or the authority which was speaking without them by the laws of the Church, which was no other than the voice of man,

and went to contravene and silence the other,—they hesitated not. On the other hand, they "*conferred not with flesh and blood,*" but "*went forth every where, the Lord working with them, and confirmed the word with signs following.*" Thus Methodism originated in the adoption of the Bible as its foundation and rule, a living and saving faith as its moving and energizing power, the spread of religion and the salvation of man as its object: believing in the divinity of its vocation, it claimed to be free from the coercion of human laws; and, "*following the commandment of God,*" it saw that it not only possessed the right, but was under "*constraint*" arising out of "*a dispensation of the Gospel*" being "*committed*" to it, to make it known to the greatest possible extent. The validity of these claims must be sought in its fruits.

3. The steadiness with which this faith has been held from the beginning must be noticed.

From the first moment when it pleased God to "*reveal his Son*" in the hearts of our Founders, to the present period, the *theory* of our system has, at least, been the same. This uniformity and steadiness of principle has been maintained in the midst of every possible form of temptation and opposition.

The introduction of this primary truth to public attention instantly aroused general indignation, as if some unheard-of heresy had sprung up. Enthusiasm, amounting to madness, was attributed to the parties holding the obnoxious sentiment, avowing, as they did, their own personal possession of the blessings they taught. For men to affirm the doctrines of faith, and then to corroborate their preaching by the profession of personal assurance, excited as much astonishment and indignation at the time, as if the most pestiferous, immoral, and dangerous tenets had been broached. But this feeling was greatly heightened, when, by the simple and lucid preaching of this faith and salvation as a common blessing, the multitudes in Moorfields, Kingswood, Newcastle, Cornwall, and the cities and villages of the nation, were moved, like the waves of the sea, and, falling under the power of the word, cried out, that "*God was among them of a truth.*" The thing became more intolerable still, when it was discovered that great numbers among the ignorant, the notoriously wicked, and brutally barbarous, of the poorer classes professed to believe in Christ, to enjoy a present pardon and peace, to know the love of God, and to be new creatures. This was considered nothing less than blasphemy; and hence they were to be assaulted at all points. Mitred, clerical, and erudite opponents girt on their armour, to write down the doctrinal truths of the Bible and of their own church; to prove that the notion of spiritual influence, and its implied results, the conversion of the heart, and sensible religious enjoyments, were the dreams of the rankest fanaticism; that the distress of penitents, attended as it was

by painful agonies of mind, and the joys of pardoned believers, could be nothing but the effect of sympathy and animal excitement; and, moreover, that the pretended reformations from habitual vice, and the practice of every domestic, social, and personal virtue, were only the colourings and assumptions of hypocrisy. These charges and assaults were reiterated in every shape, from the reasonings of sober orthodoxy, to the rank ribaldry of raving passion. But, to our admiration and gratitude, our fathers stood firm in the midst of this opposition, "*strong in faith, giving glory to God.*" No principle was ever compromised to meet a difficulty; no truth of God was ever surrendered to soften the asperities of, or to conciliate, an opponent; and no obvious course of duty, in seeking the "*lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" was ever deviated from, on the assumption, that these souls were not sought canonically. The frowns of power, the storms of popular fury and persecution, the sarcasms of the profane, the scorn of the rationalists of the age, the pointed and powerful opposition of the "church-principle" men of those times, all failed to drive them from their position on that "*rock*" on which the church is truly built, and against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

4. Hence it is appropriate to remark here, that this work of God has uniformly progressed by the simple operation of this fundamental truth.

We have the means and opportunity of examining the question from three or four several points, each somewhat different in its aspect, and yet all uniting to produce one general result. We refer to the Church at the period of the early developement of this doctrine of faith; its effects on the general masses of society; and its remarkable success in superstitious and idolatrous nations. But before we proceed to these several points of illustration, it may clear our course to remark,

(1.) That Methodism has ever, uniformly and universally, employed the doctrine of faith, as the primary and appointed instrument of saving mankind.

There is, in our apprehension, a difference betwixt a church being founded on even an evangelical system of doctrines, and those doctrines being employed as instruments in carrying out the ends of such an arrangement, in the salvation of the people. The Articles of the Establishment, for instance, have always, since the period of its foundation, been the acknowledged doctrinal system of the Church. But it would be idle to affirm, that these doctrines have been employed in every age, and by all the Clergy, to secure the beneficial purposes designed. Every one knows that at this very moment these doctrines are altogether denied, or their true meaning perverted, whilst the practical fruits contemplated by the founders of the Church, (namely,

the salvation of the people, through faith in these fundamental verities,) is now sought to be effected by other, and, as we think, insufficient, and indeed antagonist, means. That the truth so lucidly set forth in the Articles, was designed as the instrument of the nation's training, from age to age, is clear enough from the circumstance, that the same truth is embodied in the Homilies which were composed for popular use, and appointed to be read to the people.

But the Tractarians no longer trust to this evangelical system for effect. They decry the principles of the Reformation which sought, as its first duty, to overthrow the working of a scheme of a dark and superstitious period, and, after disentangling the doctrines of the Gospel from the infinite series of errors which darkened their lustre, to exhibit them to the world in their own unmixed simplicity. This noble work is now repudiated; and, instead of looking for a blessing from God in the spiritual life and happiness of men, by the truths of their own Articles received by faith, they now either deny those doctrines altogether, or seek—as was the case in the dark days of Popery—to embed them in sacramental and other forms, and look for good and useful effects, not from the truth, but from that which they consider its visible symbol.

By this means the Church, in its *offices*, and not in the Gospel which it teaches, aims to become the great operator in the extension of religion: what that religion will become, may easily be divined. The assertion of St. Paul is, that "*the church is the pillar and ground of the truth;*" but according to the *old* practice of Popery, and the *new* practice of Puseyism, allowed and tolerated in the Church of England to an alarming, and, for any thing which can be foreseen, may soon become so to a universal, extent, he ought to have said, that the church was the "*pillar and ground*" of sacraments; that these are the only objects on which the ignorant multitude need gaze, and from them, as from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses, the waters of life gush forth in healing and nourishing virtue. These sacraments, according to the modest teaching of this school, administer the grace of both justification and regeneration; they initiate into the spiritual life, and then feed the life they give. What more did Popery ever teach regarding the mass, except that it is offered and is efficacious for the dead as well as the living? This must soon follow in the new school: errors cannot, any more than truth, be made to stop half way. That which may be considered the *animus* or principle of Puseyism, is, the attempt to make religion stand on the sacraments, to give the Church by her functionaries the sole prerogative of erecting an ecclesiastical dominion, in which they may exercise an undivided power. This is "*the spirit in the wheels.*" Those wheels may turn many ways, and present a panoramic variety of aspects to the beholder; but the spring is one, it is in perfect unity with itself, it

has no clashing and contradictory elements; it can speak, or be silent, as times and circumstances require; but its quiet is only the serpent in coil: it has one soul, though its external figure may assume a thousand shapes.

The end of all this is to produce moral impressions and religious effects, by means of external symbols. It would not, in this attempt, be safe to discard the great facts and doctrines of the Gospel altogether; and hence, instead of standing out in their own simplicity, fulness, and sufficiency, as in themselves objects of saving faith, they are twisted, minified, humanized, and then incorporated into the new temple-service, to stand out in the place of the types and shadows so long ago departed. Every blessing and grace of Christianity is held to be limited to this system.

The induction of particulars is easy. The Church, it is maintained, is one; the one Church, of divine right, is Episcopalian; the Church of England only possesses Episcopalian orders and government; therefore, this Church is the only true, catholic, apostolic Church in these realms. But, more: the sacraments of the Church, we are taught, embody and exhibit the grace of the Gospel. Through these the "*body and blood of Christ*" can alone be made available, because the elements can only be transmuted by passing through the hands, and receiving the qualified touch, of the successionist Priest. Justification, spiritual life, and the privileges of the Gospel, it is not denied, flow through the blood of Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. The veriest Papist or Puseyite in the world will allow this; but then it is the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as connected with the ministrations of these particular Priests. This, it is every where assumed, is the only channel in which the divine mercy flows, and, consequently, the only mode of salvation to lost mankind. The inference is easy and inevitable. The way, and the *only* way, of extending Christianity, according to these views, is, to set up this hierarchy, to exhibit these sacraments, to invite all to believe in their efficacy; and, receiving the *material substances* of water in baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's supper, from the only hands amongst men possessing the magic ability to perform the miracle and administer the mercy, they shall then surely be saved. In this theory, faith is not made to rest on the divine testimony, the promise of God. The "*Gospel*" which was commanded to be "*preached to all people,*" and on *hearing* of which it is said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,*" is as nothing. This new, or—as St. Paul designates a similar case—"*another, Gospel*" is not truth presented to the mind, producing a change by a process of illumination, persuasion, trust, sanctification, and love. It is, on the other hand, an exhibition to the senses of symbols, the meaning of which neither the exhibitor, nor the persons to

whom the exhibition is made, are supposed at all to understand. The fancy, imagination, and feelings are enlisted; and by impressions intangible, and perfectly mysterious, the material elements which are put into the hands, or held up to the senses, of the recipient, are supposed to produce a spiritual, divine, and saving change in the immaterial, but fallen and guilty, spirit. If this principle be true, if it really indicate the design of the Gospel, then it follows, that the only mode by which it is possible to save mankind, and evangelize the world, is to desist from the old practice of preaching the Gospel, and in its stead to set up Episcopal altars, and to employ the pulpit and the press merely to persuade men that they ought to lay aside their intellect, and use only their senses; that religion is no matter of thought, conviction, rational persuasion, and exercise of what used to be called faith; that St. Peter, St. Paul, and Jesus Christ were all in error, when the first said, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God;*" (1 Peter i. 23;) the second, "*In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;*" (Eph. i. 13;) the Saviour himself, in his prayer, when he uttered the remarkable words, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth;*" (John xvii. 17;)—we say, all this must be entirely repudiated, and a mere aptitude to submit to authority, yield up the mind to the imagination, practise well the senses in conveying the impressions intended to be wrought by the use of symbols to the soul, and then, if not vitiated by a flaw in the credentials of the actor in the scene, then religion, in all its principles, immunities, graces, holiness, and rewards, will infallibly be the issue.

The trial is going on; the consequences must be portentous. If the old dogmas of Popery, in this new combination, work different results than before, then the usual connexion betwixt cause and effect will be broken, and amongst other gifts with which the Oxford school is endowed, must be that of miracles. But, no; a dark and irreligious superstition, if not a mental, ecclesiastical, and civil despotism, such as in every instance has followed in the wake of principles similar to those referred to, must again, if this attempt at their propagation prove successful, afflict our country and the world.

The *principle* of Methodism is antagonist to this, ever has been, and we trust ever will be. It has, from its earliest efforts, only attempted to save mankind by the truth received by faith. This has been its only instrumentality. External forms did nothing for it, for in truth it had none. Its people were not saved by sacraments, for they never attended them till led to the national communion by the previous faith, which, through the word, had been produced in their hearts. When passing from scene to scene, in their early labours,

what did the first Apostles of this blessed work carry with them? Literally nothing but their Bibles. When they stood in the midst of rude, ignorant, and profligate multitudes, endeavouring to persuade them to "*flee from the wrath to come*," to "*repent and turn to the Lord*," to "*believe in the Lord Jesus*," that they might be "*saved*;" what instruments did they employ? Certainly none but the truth; the doctrines and commands of the word of God. How should they, indeed, do otherwise, when in reality they possessed no other? They were driven destitute and powerless into the world. No enchanting music, brilliant candles, rising incense, decorated altars, imposing ceremonial, awaited them, to give effect to their message. A stone, elevated above the common level, served for their pulpit; the street, road, or field, for their place of audience; the shadowy umbrage of hedge, trees, or forest, for their shelter from winds, rain, or heat; and the only means employed was the use of the human voice, the bended knee, the hymn of praise, and the plain and heart-searching sermon.

(2.) This doctrine of a personal and experimental faith was introduced into the church and nation at a period of formality and spiritual death, and produced a powerful result.

The Christian church, it is agreed on all hands, at the period in question, though existing on its present foundations as to truth and order, generally speaking, consisted of formal bodies, without life and vitality. The services and ministrations, so much relied upon, existed then, as well as now, and yet produced but little effect. The theology of the times was cold, formal, and legal; but destitute of evangelical doctrine, clearness, point, unction, and of an attempt to plant the truth in the heart as a living principle of faith and experience. The pulpit exercises were in agreement with the chilling nature of the doctrine; void of animation, importunity, pathos, and power; they were the mere official performance of the duties of the hour, and without reference to usefulness and conversion. But were not the sacraments administered by men in the succession? and if so, could the effect fail, and the people be devoid of saving grace? Here is the refutation of this theory. This order of Ministers existed, and has always existed, and been scattered through the nation; and yet saving effects are not seen to follow its ministrations. Surely, if the grace of justification and regeneration had certainly followed the initiatory sacrament of baptism, to be renewed and confirmed as certainly in that of the Lord's supper, then the fruits of these exalted blessings must have been manifest in the religious happiness and Christian holiness of, at least, those who confirmed the grace received in the first of these ordinances, by attending the second. But the testimony of all contemporaneous observers is to the

effect, that spiritual death almost universally reigned. The necessary result followed, and immorality and every kind of evil covered the land.

But the introduction of the doctrine of faith, proclaimed, as often as possible, from the pulpits of the Establishment, and irregularly through the whole country as well, soon began to be felt. Besides the promulgation of the doctrine itself, societies of living believers were united in every part of the kingdom, who became the witnesses of the truth, and the salt of the age. These knots of holy people, which in primitive times would have been called churches, became in their turn the centres of a mighty influence and power. Though attached to the Church of England, and generally attending her ordinances, she never, except in a very few instances, acknowledged them as her children. But the light they reflected could not be put out. They embodied the truth they had received, the blessings God had conferred, and the joys and privileges of his salvation, in so clear and vivid a manner, that the effect of their testimony could not be prevented. And although the Establishment refused, formally, to sanction the movements of the leaders of Methodism, or to adopt their spiritual children; yet it is notorious that, either from the Calvinistic or the Wesleyan branch, she received most, if not all, her distinguished lights of the last age.

Two facts are undeniable; namely, that, prior to the rise of Methodism, the Church had lost the spirit of her own creeds, substituted a heathen morality in their place, was careless as to the salvation of the people over whom she had the legal charge, and had sunk, not so much into rationalism as into indifference; and that, concurrently with the progress of this new developement of spiritual power, there rose up in her bosom an evangelical spirit. Nearly the same may be said of the Dissenting bodies. Those which had retained their orthodoxy seem to have possessed but little life, and to have expended but an equally trifling amount of zeal in evangelical labour. The distinctive forms of Methodism are one thing, and its spirit another. We consider it as one of those religious epochs which are created by the joint operation of the providence and Spirit of God. It was, in its origin, the turning over of a new page in "*the little book held in the hand of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*" (Rev. v. 5.) It was of the nature of a new "*visitation from on high;*" a "*shaking of the*" mystic "*heavens and earth;*" not a new dispensation of the Gospel, except in commission, but a mighty impulse given to the old one; not the addition of any new truth, but the resurrection of that which had long been entombed, with a command for its flight as with angelic wings through the nations of the earth; and it was not the creation of a new spiritual order of Ministers in the Christian economy, but it was new life and anointing from on high

given to that which already existed; an outpouring of the Spirit, a deepening of the "*river of the water of life.*"

The true spirit of religion, like the winds of heaven, invigorates all things brought under its influence, though not of its own essence. With the diffusion of pious feeling, the standard of morals rises to an elevation which is impracticable while society is destitute of its impulse, its power, and its hopes. In unison with moral elevation, intellectual strength is developed, and the wonderful resources of the human mind are seen in rich variety. Whilst barbarism is the fruit of ignorance, and ignorance the fruit of vice, it follows that to strike at sin, to implant the fear of God, to train the people in habits of piety and devotion, and to inculcate the maxims of Christian virtue, must lay the foundation of public wisdom and morality, at the same time that it secures individual happiness. Those who are fond of decrying the last great revival of religion as a national evil, and, when they touch this string, invariably do it with tones of melancholy or passion, just as nature may happen to pre-dispose, will do well to account for—what is on their principles inexplicable—the phenomenon, that, during the period of the fermentation of this mischievous leaven, the nation has risen to its highest point of glory.

We are aware that by a strange ingenuity it is now a point of policy, in taking the moral statistics of the country, to discard as unchristian, unholy, and publicly injurious, every thing which cannot be put within the pale of the Establishment. The masses of men employed in manufactures, collieries, and others, are described as being entirely destitute of Christianity, because the supineness of past years has failed to provide for them churches and Ministers; whilst in truth, for nearly a century, these classes have been the objects of our incessant care; numerous and spacious places of worship have been erected for their benefit; large and flourishing congregations collected; and societies, comprehending tens of thousands, united in church-fellowship. We are, indeed, as ready to mourn over the great evils existing amongst this portion of the community as any other parties; but we deny the fairness of the attempt to classify us and other religious communities amongst Chartists, Socialists, and Infidels, and we refuse to take the place assigned us in this category of vice and sin. Is it not ineffably disgusting to hear men contrast with our own times former periods of our history, (evidently meaning those anterior to the Reformation,) for the purpose of exhibiting Popery as operating most beneficially, and the modern system most perniciously, on the religious character and moral state of the nation? The domination of the clerical order, the universal authority and influence of ecclesiastical law, the faithful allegiance of the nobles and the State to papal power, the unresisting subjection of the populace, the reign of a dark, bewildering, and oppressive superstition, are all

dwelt upon with the fond feeling of the poet mourning over the ruins of Troy. Nothing is seen in these portions of our history, whilst the "*man of sin*" held dominion, but beauty and glory. A nation covered with monasteries, cloisters, religious houses, and filled with idle and dissipated monks and nuns, is the *beau ideal* of religious prosperity and perfection in the opinion of—"*tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!*"—the Oxford theologians, educated, honoured, and endowed to teach Protestant doctrine in the Protestant Church of these realms! Whilst all the charms of poetry and eloquence are called up to paint the glories of Popery in the gorgeous tints of unmixed beauty and happiness, equal labour is employed, though in a very different style, to exhibit the period to which our remarks refer, as that of unmitigated ignorance and barbarism. It is described as the iron age of our beloved country; and, as to religion, it is sketched as the very night of the world, without one radiant beam, one glittering star, one ray of blessedness, to relieve the dismal gloom. The meaning of all this is clear enough. An impression is intended to be made, especially on the minds of our legislators and the higher classes, that nothing but a more stringent system of religious law and clerical authority, accompanied by a corresponding apparatus of superstition, can possibly conserve the nation from the imagined evils resulting from freedom of thought and worship. We demur to these assumed facts, as well as the reasoning founded upon them. On the contrary, we believe, the brightest moral epoch of our history lies within the limits of the much-maligned period in question.

It will not, however, suit the occasion, to go into any thing like a general proof. Let us limit our evidence to one fact only,—*evangelical enterprise*. The past century has seen more done for the conversion of the world, than has ever been witnessed in a similar period of time: may we not say, than had been witnessed during the whole period, from the age of the Apostles down to the commencement of the era referred to? If the past century had been so entirely destitute of all Christian truth, piety, principle, and charity as is represented, how came this to pass? We have beheld the light of Christianity emanating from our shores to bless nearly all nations. Is this term too general? Then we have seen all the agencies which Christianity can employ, engaged to bless the world, on a much larger scale than in any former period. Are we to be driven, by this new mode of tactics, from the recollection that the blessed Bible has been translated into a great number of languages and dialects; that a mighty apparatus of education for the benefit of all nations, has been put in motion; that, above all, the Gospel has been, and is now being, preached to an indefinite extent in every climate, and on every shore; and, despite the derision of vain and supercilious men, churches,—

true Christian churches,—embracing tens of thousands who have as much right to the Christian name as any others, have been planted? If this is not religion, then we ask, What is it? Now, will the parties who are so anxious to fix on what may be called the Methodistic epoch of our history the charge of religious indifference, or only a mischievous activity, have the goodness to tell us how they account for this one fact? Their friend and co-worker, Dr. Wiseman, cuts the knot at once, by denying that any success has attended these evangelical exertions.

But, passing over this denial as it deserves, and assuming the truth of the statements contained in the reported statistics of our respective Protestant churches, we infer that a deep and powerful religious principle has been at work. That spirit and agency which has *voluntarily* reared so many noble structures for Christian worship in this country, furnished so great a number of able men to preach the truth, trained up myriads of immortal spirits in wisdom, piety, public virtue, and divine love, and diligently attended to the wants of the young and the poor,—when endowed indifference allowed them to remain in ignorance and sin,—could be no other than religious and divine, unless moral principle has changed its nature, and evil has become good. And, moreover, the charity and zeal which devised the means, and prompted the men to descend into the depths of darkness and misery presented by enslaved Negroes, savage Pagans, and wandering hordes of destitute men, in order to reclaim them from their barbarism, and lead them to Christ,—could be no other than Christian. It would be cowardice in us, my dear brethren, nay, it would be unfaithfulness to God, not to vindicate his own work against the malevolent aspersions of its bitter enemies.

But why do we dwell on this? Because the policy is to decry, not merely Methodism in its organized form, but the *spirit*, the *origin*, and the *spring* of the great movement of which the name is the mere type. In opposition to this, we hold it to be divine, because so sanatory and useful in its operations. We prove this by the fact, that, in addition to the life and health imparted to its actual disciples, it has withered nothing in which moral life was found. The nation and the world have advanced in all the blessings of civilization; all the evangelical Dissenting churches have manifested a new spring of life and power; the Establishment has shaken herself from her slumbers, and has *"put on her beautiful garments;"* and, it is extremely probable, that, but for the awakenings of this revival of religion, even the men who are now so actively zealous in opposition to its progress and growth, would have been quiet enough in the slumbers of a common moral death. It is in the order of things, that the same glorious sun which, by his genial beams, draws forth all the beauties and fertility of nature, also warms the viper into life. Whether

ecclesiastical and other authorities are prepared to allow the fact or not, yet the annals of the period under consideration cannot be expunged, and impartial history must make known two undeniable truths; namely, that at the time the instruments of this work began to proclaim the doctrine of an evangelical faith, the church and nation were in a very degraded state as to religion and morals, and that, concurrently with the teaching of this truth, a great and important change has been wrought, embracing the growth of a powerful religious principle, an elevated tone of morals, and, also, on the whole, a vast improvement of the nation, at home and abroad, in all the characteristics of freedom, order, knowledge, wealth, and greatness.

(3.) We behold the simple truth, which produced so great a change in the Church and nation, operating in the midst of the most profligate, rude, and immoral masses of the people, and gathering beautiful and glorious fruit.

That great changes followed when men were visited by the Preachers of faith in the crucified Saviour, were offered a free and gratuitous pardon through his blood, and pressed to enter into the kingdom of God, is a fact attested by undeniable evidence. That a vast number of individuals and families, in the most destitute localities,—as colliers, miners, boatmen, working manufacturers, mechanics, peasants, farmers,—were roused from their slumbers, awakened to serious reflection, became devout in their spirit, and pure in their lives, is a matter of history. A social change followed the religious one. These individuals and families were improved in their habits, became sober and industrious, were employed in places of trust, gradually accumulated property, and became the pillars and the ornaments of society. It is impossible to conceive what the condition of these classes must have been, as to morals and civil order, had not this much-maligned system sought them out in their wretchedness and sin. Did either the church or the nation care for the souls of these wandering sheep? Were churches built, endowments bestowed, Pastors sent, the Gospel preached, and religious education provided, for these accumulating masses of human beings? It is notorious that for at least two generations, ours was nearly the only body who felt the urgency of their case, and made some humble efforts, as means could be obtained, to meet the growing necessity. We are now reproached on account of these exertions. Our labours are considered rebellion, and our uniting these poor outcasts in Christian communion as schism.

The result is both our reward and defence. A countless multitude, who "*have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,*" are now before the throne of God: many of their descendants, after emerging, by the force of those principles which religion implanted, and its habits taught, from the low and common

level of society, are now filling honourable and useful posts, though no longer with us. A seed has been left, however, which has greatly increased in number, influence, and usefulness; spacious and commodious places of worship have been reared, and means provided, for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of its ordinances; and, above all, we have reason to rejoice, that great multitudes of the present generation of the classes above mentioned are worshipping God in spirit, and rejoicing in possession of all the privileges of grace.

What produced these results? The simple doctrine of salvation by faith. It came upon the slumbering age with the impressiveness of a new revelation; it flew, as news of strange but of transcendent importance, that man might know his sins forgiven, be "*born again*," and enjoy the love of God; the arrested and awakened multitudes transmitted the intelligence from place to place, till it reached the utmost verge of the nation; the saved of the Lord bore an experimental testimony to what their eyes had seen, their ears heard, and their hearts felt and enjoyed; and, in the end, though agitation, tumult, confusion, and opposition attended the process, large bodies of the people were upheaved from the depths of degradation in which they had sunk, and were presented to the beholder, like a submerged island raised in all the beauty and fertility of spiritual life.

If the doctrine of salvation by faith only be called in question,—which is now, and ever has been, the fact with unspiritual men,—we have no objection to put the proof of its efficiency on the effects produced in the case under consideration. Cures wrought in the most inveterate instances of disease are rightly considered the best possible evidence of the skill of the Physician and the efficacy of his remedies. It has often, as at present, been the reproach of our body, that the educated, intellectual, scientific, and polite classes of society are rarely, if ever, brought to embrace our tenets and join our community. It may be so, and yet be no reproach to us. The question is not, whether our system of doctrine and communion is palatable to those who are "*whole and need not a Physician;*" but, What has been the *effect* of the teaching and grace ministered by this church upon the diseased, who seek healing for their wounded spirits? It is stated, that none but the ignorant condescend to place themselves under its ministry and ordinances. Does it leave them ignorant? if not, where is the sting of the sarcasm? Let the answer be the glorious fact, that nearly the whole community, from the beginning to the present time, Ministers and people, belonged to the poorer classes, many of whom are now, and long have been, walking in the paths of truth, and of elevated, practical, useful, and especially religious, knowledge. The objection is reiterated in another form; and it is said, that the vicious and wicked are chiefly operated upon. Are they left wicked? It is obvious that these persons, being in the most desperate

circumstances, need the most pity and care. And, undoubtedly, Methodism has gone down into the lowest depths of sin and misery. It has planted its ordinances, and poured forth its healing waters, in the midst of the poorest and most wicked and polluted portions of the population; and from amongst these destitute and neglected classes it has gained some of its most glorious triumphs. Even the modern Methodists themselves, who now worship God in their peaceful and quiet chapels, and live in the midst of cultivated religious society, can scarcely conceive the extent to which this was the case in the beginning. If this is our disgrace, we hail and welcome it; or, rather, we adore God for his goodness in permitting us to bear reproach for his name's sake. And we take courage, and gather consolation from the conviction, that the doctrine of salvation by faith only, which has thus saved, purified, elevated, and made myriads of the most miserable families holy and happy, cannot but be both true and divine.

(4.) But, above all, the efficiency of the doctrine of salvation by faith only, is most fully illustrated by its success amongst the dark and idolatrous heathen nations.

The brightest demonstration of the transcendent value and importance of this divine truth, is to be sought on pagan ground. Here, if any where, it might be imagined, the experiment must fail. The simple doctrine of salvation by faith, it might be objected, cannot possibly meet evils and wants so complex as those found in the dark and bewildering superstitions of these besotted nations. "Will you pretend," it has been tauntingly inquired, "to wean the people from their idolatry, break down their superstitions, dry up the fountain of their corruptions, and superinduce a new and Christian state of things, by your fond fancy, your fanatical preaching of Christ crucified?" Let the result be the answer. This doctrine was proclaimed to slaves in Heathenism; a class the most degraded, bought and sold like beasts of burden, their intellectual condition corresponding to their civil state, and, moreover, their morals as low as sin could possibly reduce them. The messengers of our church visited them in these circumstances, and preached this truth; and this was their only instrumentality in seeking their conversion,—they possessed no other. They were without power, and, had they been disposed to employ it, possessed no means of coercion; they were without friends, and could not, had their principles urged them to it, put the Negro race under a long course of preparatory education and training; they were opposed, despised, and persecuted, and had not the opportunity, on account of the condition of the slaves, even of exercising a perfect discipline, or regularly administering the sacraments. All that was left them in this region of oppressive misery and sin, was to scatter, as casual opportunities occurred, the

"*seed of the kingdom,*" and especially the privileges of the Gospel, including the present pardon of sin and the renovation of the heart. What was the issue? As if their chains, labours, wrongs, and expatriation from the shores of their own country, had predisposed them to embrace the Gospel, or, rather, as if especially prepared of God, these poor outcasts caught at the "*glad tidings*" with the utmost eagerness. The truth fermented in the mass, and rapidly extended its influence. The offer of pardon, through faith,—the plainest of all propositions, and yet, to the carnal mind, the most perplexing,—was easily understood by the poor Africans; and they pressed to the cross to receive the great salvation. Neither the cruel lash of the whip, the stocks, the dungeon, nor the infliction of any other possible injury; nor yet the imprisonment of their Ministers, the shutting up of their chapels, and the interdicts of law against their Christian communion; could stop the progress of the work, or extinguish the sacred flame of piety and love which had been kindled amongst them. Like the Israelites in Egypt, the more they were oppressed, the more they grew in numbers, strength, and piety. And after the struggles of many years, the endurance of every variety of injury, and bearing meekly every possible form of contempt, by the force of the truth they had embraced, they are free, they are happy, and they are on the road to civilization and wealth.

The Methodist church in the West Indies presents to view one of the most magnificent triumphs of the Gospel in modern times; and illustrates, as clearly as the thing can admit of illustration, the divine efficiency of the simple doctrines of the Gospel. As the forest grows from the slips and seeds deposited in the bosom of the earth, so from the truth taught by a few despised and much-injured Missionaries in these regions, a beautiful and holy community has grown up, rich in piety and pure in morals. Whilst other religious appliances have utterly failed when tried, and have often not been tried at all, because a failure was certainly anticipated, the Ministers of this doctrine never for a moment thought of abandoning even so unpromising a field for the want of success. They knew that the Saviour whom they preached died equally for "*Jew and Gentile, bond and free;*" and that faith in his name would as certainly bring the one as the other into a justified and regenerate state, and fit them for the communion of the church, the blessings of civil freedom, and the joys of heaven. The effects are before the world; but the world, through false principles and besotted prejudices, cannot see them. In the meanwhile, peace with God in the heart, possessed beneath a sable skin, joys divine, flowing from lips unaccustomed to the language of praise, the feeling of love and charity, the idea and the habit of worship, the admission of the obligations of Christian morality, the gradual influence and authority of scriptural discipline,

the adoption of the marriage-bond, the training and education of Christian families,—have all united to prepare these people for the blessings of civil freedom, and to fit them to render a loyal allegiance to the State.

Besides the salvation which the doctrine of faith has wrought,—which is itself sufficient for our argument,—all the collateral blessings referred to have sprung from this root. It does not embrace, in detail, the separate graces of the Christian character, and the virtues of public life; but it is the soul of them all. As the heart propels the blood through the veins, so as to give life, vigour, health, and beauty to the body; so this doctrine gives tone, strength, and activity even to the commonly-recognised moral and social virtues. Had the national obligation of emancipation been hazarded by some master-spirit, without the concurrent influence and teaching of true religion, as preparatory to the reception of the blessing by the slaves, the scheme would have been deemed Utopian. The negro race, in our own colonies, owe their personal freedom to the influence of Christian teaching on their own character, and the world owes all the consequences of this mighty moral example to the force and energy of the doctrine of salvation by faith. The hands which struck off the fetters of these poor slaves were the Missionaries of the Cross, who taught them that they were men, led them to the temple of religion, and pointed them to a glorious immortality. In this, as in all similar cases, the great preparatory ameliorations which have taken place, are owing to the influence of vital religion. Such effects as these never come from the hands of secular legislation. Tribes, classes, and nations, which obtain improved institutions, do so by the elevation of personal character; and this again is brought about by the power of the Gospel.

Similar illustrations of the wonderful efficacy of the doctrine of salvation by faith, might be given from many other quarters. But we desist, with the one remark, that the same simple truth has been taught to savage hordes, to polluted idolaters, and to the children of the wilderness, with equally satisfactory results. Tens of thousands, in less than a generation, have been brought into Christian communion, kneel together at the table of the Lord, exhibit all the characteristics of the spiritual mind, read the word of God, devoutly sing his praises, and offer prayer to him, in their now Christian families; they observe all the rules of morality and godly order, and live in the joyful hope of heaven: and this new creation has all sprung from one only root,—the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.

5. The genuineness of this faith, as being scriptural and divine, stands corroborated by every form and kind of evidence.

We have the evidence of *personal testimony*. In imitation of the

primitive church, it has, through the whole period of our history, been considered the sacred duty of all who themselves have found the Lord to become his "*witnesses*" in the world. This is believed to be one of the functions and obligations of the church. To "*acknowledge*," "*confess*," "*bear witness*" to, and "*follow*," our Lord, are terms in constant use in relation to the practice of the first believers. The confession of faith in Christ by the apostolic church was not subscription to a creed, the adoption of formularies, meeting at the Lord's table, union in public worship—some of these, no doubt, were included; but it was a living, personal testimony, borne by grateful and sanctified spirits, to the truth and grace of God.

Much obloquy has been thrown on some of our institutions and means of grace, on account of their design to call forth this living testimony of a believing church to the work of God in their hearts. A thousand silly objections are started, to all of which one only answer is perfectly sufficient. Does the practice agree with primitive and apostolic principle and precedent? We reply, that innumerable passages of the New Testament, some speaking the language of blessing and privilege, others of precept, command, and narrative, can only be interpreted on the principle we maintain. In this first age we have nothing like an ecclesiastical faith,—men made believers on the ground of an economical arrangement,—or adoption into the Christian family by subjection to a ceremony, without any saving knowledge of Christ. A mute church, or one made vocal only by the utterance of a common creed, or responses to a common form of prayer, was unknown to the Apostles. Every one was supposed to "*know in whom he had believed*," and to be under an obligation "*with his mouth to make confession unto salvation.*" (2 Tim. i. 12; Rom. x. 10.) All this, no doubt, was under the judicious direction and guidance of the Apostles and Elders; but in their intercourse with the world, and amongst their unbelieving relations, they were left to exercise their gifts, and to bear their witness, as an enlightened mind might dictate, or as the "*Spirit gave them utterance.*"

We have encouraged this kind of testimony, under proper guidance; and great has been the benefit to us and to the world. Much of the instruction of both the Old and New Testament consists of the memorials of living piety. The best, indeed almost the only, monuments of the church in the first ages, of any value or consideration, are the experimental and suffering testimony of the martyred hosts who sealed their faith by their blood.

"*Our fathers, too, where are they?*" They are silent as regards the accustomed places of their long "*prophesying in sackcloth;*" (may we not call it?) but, "*being dead, they yet speak to us.*" We do not boast, and yet we have our succession,—a succession of living witnesses. For more than a century, a long and numerous line of

Christian believers, united to each other in bonds of the tenderest love, have spoken the same language, and attest, that, through the truth they have heard, they have attained to faith, and enjoyed an assurance of salvation. This witness is echoed by multitudes in all stations, from distant shores of many nations, and in numerous languages. It is difficult to imagine either collusion or deception in this case. The question is one of fact; namely, whether or not belief in the doctrines taught by our church has resulted in those blessings and changes which are described as belonging to the primitive church. It is not in the nature of things, that all the parties concerned must be incompetent to give their testimony in such cases; and to represent the religion of the new covenant, as of so equivocal a character as not to admit of it, is to malign its Author and design. St. Peter said, "*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*" (1 Peter iii. 15.) It may serve the purposes of those who have no experimental knowledge, or, according to St. Paul, "*assurance of knowledge,*" to represent the whole process of conversion as an unintelligible operation, and those who profess to "*know in whom they have believed,*" as fanatical persons. But the question is not so treated in Scripture; and on other subjects the inductive test is taken as conclusive evidence. When millions of lips attest the same truth, some on earth and the greater number in heaven; when this witness is not the language of a class, but of all classes,—men of acute intellect, of erudition, of scientific pursuits;—of students and masters of the general principles and rules of law; of merchants and men of business, as well as of peasants and operatives;—we say, when all these bear a united testimony, it must in the main be true, if any certainty of knowledge is to be attained on earth. These "*are our epistle, known and read of all men.*" (2 Cor. iii. 2.)

Our case is a plain one. Those who deny our divine vocation will necessarily have to prove that Methodism is not Christianity. This will oblige them to put a negative on the testimony which we adduce, and to pronounce the whole to be one bold, long-continued, united, simultaneous, many-tongued LIE. We say nothing now on the question of polity; that is a distinct thing; we merely refer to the living witness of our people. If this be denied, then it must be contended that the whole system is rotten falsehood; that its disciples are composed of deceivers and deceived; and, moreover, that the lives and deaths of those who have departed from this world were mere embodied mockery. All this must be done, or the inference is inevitable,—that "this witness is true;" and, being allowed, then a proof of true religion is made out, a work of God is involved; and from this it will follow, that the evidence of a state of scriptural Christianity is fully established.

If this united witness be not, in itself, deemed sufficient, we are willing to abide by the test of St. James: "*Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*" Evidence of a sound and scriptural faith may be considered both *personal* and *collective*.

Personal evidence of faith, from works, must be sought in the individual piety and holiness of believers. "*The tree is known by its fruit.*" (Matt. xii. 33.) God forbid that we should lay claim to a piety, holiness, zeal, and devotedness, anywise equal to our obligations, or at all on a level with the mighty mercy and grace of redemption, the promised influence and sanctifying power of the Comforter, or the perfection of the divine law. Nothing of this is meant, and we are perfectly willing to confess our sins and short-comings. But our question relates to the truth of things, to a genuine result, rather than to the degree in which it exists; this of necessity greatly varies in different individuals. We have often been exposed to a cross-fire from the batteries of our assailants; and while one class has lampooned us on account of a supposed fanaticism, by reason of our holding the doctrine of salvation by faith only, another has done the same on the contrary plea of our being legal, and insisting on the obligations of practical piety, and the diligent discharge of holy duties. Our very name imports strictness of life; and since it might be deemed invidious, and savouring of vanity, were we to argue from the piety of our own age, we will put our proof on times which are past. That the fathers and people of our community were eminent in self-denial and the endurance of persecution; constant and fervent in the spirit and habits of prayer and devotion; regular in their attendance upon divine ordinances; attentive and humble in the house of God; conscientious in the sanctification of the Sabbath, and anxious to improve its sacred rest; plain, sober, chaste, and Christian in their modes of life; zealous in the support of the institutions of religion, and laborious in the dissemination of the truth; pitiful, benevolent, and attentive to the wants of the suffering poor, the afflicted, and dying:—we say, that all these marks of piety and good works were extensively, if not universally, regarded, is attested by the reproaches of enemies, as well as by the records of our dead. When these things were novel, they excited the astonishment of all men; now that they are common, they raise the wonder of none. The faith of the Gospel in the case of our noble ancestors, eminently "*worked by love;*" and they "*excelled in every good work.*" They obeyed the apostolic injunction: "*Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity;*" and the annexed promise has been fulfilled: "*So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the*

everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 5—7, 11.)

Collective evidence of the vitality of faith amongst us is to be sought in our institutions, and their beneficial operation on the state of the world. When we see a civil community living in peace, virtue, freedom, and plenty, we naturally conclude that a spirit of love, equity, and good government must pervade and animate the whole. In like manner, when we behold religious institutions pouring light, grace, holiness, and salvation, domestic and temporal enjoyment, on thousands around, we have a right to infer that they are resting on the truth, are animated and imbued by a spirit of piety, and enjoy the blessing of God. THE STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE IN THIS CASE ARISES OUT OF THE FACT, THAT THE WHOLE OF OUR MEANS OF DOING GOOD, AND THE FRUIT RESULTING, HAVE SPRUNG FROM A GENUINE FAITH; AND THAT OUR INSTITUTIONS DID NOT PRODUCE OUR FAITH, BUT OUR FAITH THE INSTITUTIONS.

The means of preaching the Gospel, and of applying religious consolation at home and abroad, must be classed among this holy fruit. We see around us numerous places of worship, and thousands of Ministers employed in proclaiming the truth and administering the ordinances; we behold a mighty Missionary apparatus sending its agents and pouring its blessings on every shore; we witness means for the instruction and training of the children of the poor, the youth of the community, and candidates for the ministry; we are cheered by the sight of Benevolent and other charitable Societies, designed to feed, clothe, and in some degree to provide for, the destitute, homeless, and sick. We stop to ask, "Whence has all this sprung? Is it the gift of the wealthy? or does it flow from the endowments of the State?" The answer is at hand: "It has all arisen from the piety of—a comparatively poor people." No princely or noble patrons have appeared to enrich our church by their bounty. Our means of usefulness spring from the operation of a powerful principle, adopted and acted upon by all. The hands which have built our Zion, in its material and external form, are the laborious hands of her faithful sons. Let candid and honest men determine whether the motive has proceeded from a spirit of superstition, or a spirit of faith and love.

In conjunction with testimony and works in evidence of the scriptural and divine origin of this cause, we have privilege attained and happiness enjoyed. With the Evangelists and primitive church, the leaders of this work have ever held that the true Christian faith, in connexion with its attendant grace, must be productive of spiritual happiness.

The question of *feeling*, indeed, has been the subject of boundless reproach on the part of our opponents, and of great glorying on our own. We have always held that the affections have much to

do with our system of religion, as we are certain they had with that of apostolic times. How can it be otherwise, in the case of a divine and vital work of grace? What is the language of Scripture? Take the case of a justified man, an adopted child, a regenerate spirit, a state of Christian holiness. Can these blessings be possessed without emotion? without the affections being excited, and the soul attuned to the highest happiness? Speaking of these several states,—which, by the by, are not several in their enjoyment, but one and indivisible, and he who has attained to one, must have attained to them all,—the language of feeling is used in every variety. "*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Rom. v. 1.) "*Having made peace through the blood of his cross.*" (Col. i. 20.) "*The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts xiii. 52.) "*We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*" "*We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*" "*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*" (Rom. v. 2, 11, 8.) "*He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*" "*Perfect love casteth out fear.*" (1 John iv. 16, 18.) These and similar expressions are constantly employed by the sacred writers, when they speak of experimental and personal religion. Is there no emotion of the mind, no excitement of the passions, in all this? Those who deny the legitimacy of feeling, and an appeal to the hopes, joys, and affections in religion, neither understand its nature nor the structure of man. To touch the heart, to engage the sympathies, and to enlist the sentient faculties, on the side of piety, devotion, and holiness, have been considered as evidence either of deceptive designs, or of fanaticism. What, then, is religion a mathematical problem,—a demonstration,—an abstraction,—a cold region of metaphysical speculation,—a dry detail of duty,—a rotatory movement amid senseless ceremonies? No; it introduces us to God as reconciled,—*our* Father, *our* Friend, *our* God. It places us beneath the cross, gives us an interest in redemption, makes the Saviour's merit our own, and unites us as "*joint heirs*" with him in all the blessings of his "*purchased possession.*" It brings to our wants and miseries the dispensation of the Spirit, and bestows his illuminations, power, sanctity, and consolations on the soul. Is it conceivable, that this interest in the adorable Trinity, manifesting the peculiar glories of the separate Persons in the work of our salvation, can be enjoyed without the highest ecstasy of happiness?

We glory in the reproach that our people manifest *feeling;* that they embody their faith and enjoyments in lofty sentiment, in hymns of animated praise, in undecaying joys, in fervour of spirit, and in impassioned devotion. And, moreover, we affirm that the primitive church, in her ordinances and communion, was framed on the princi-

ple of creating and eliciting these feelings. We imitated, in this, the first societies of Christians, and never considered any portion of the community in a healthy and prosperous state, unless, with the administration of the truth and ordinances, it could present to the view of the visible church and invisible powers, a people pardoned, reconciled to God, living in his communion, and giving utterance to the language of thanksgiving and praise. Thank God, this has been heard in our sanctuaries from the beginning; and not only in the high places of religion, but in deep poverty, excruciating pain, exhausting afflictions, dark temporal visitations, and the agonies of death!

We are not alone in this. Besides the first Christians, and the martyr church, it is the state of the simple, unsophisticated followers of Christ, of all parties and nations. Feeling, it may be allowed, has sometimes been really eccentric; and, for want of sympathy with its causes, has appeared so to men in other cases. How should the merely mental and animal tastes of the godless have any communion of feeling with the happiness of piety? And how should those *true fanatics*, who are exciting themselves, and attempting to inflame others, by the means of a fascinating externalism, possess any sentiments in common with those who take the blessings of divine grace, as the free gifts of God, from his own hands, and offer him the praise of his blessings from the altar of their own hearts, instead of presenting them upon the altars of a human system? May we never lose this reproach; or, rather, may we never deserve to lose it! Are we not in some danger? The freshness of novelty is over; the simplicity of former times is gone; and the oneness of our religious privileges is invaded by the intermixture of worldly possessions and enjoyments. Let us guard our hearts and our services, lest our feelings should be chilled, and the sacred fire go out on our altars.

The fair inference from this united evidence is, that a system, which in faith and experience so fully harmonizes with primitive truth and feeling, must originate in the one and undivided work of the Mediator, by the operation of the "*one Spirit*" of the living God.

That religion which is not only of God by the provisional arrangements of his grace, but is also wrought by him, cannot be essentially different—be it found in what age or in what community it may—in any of its living developements. We hear much of primitive Christianity, of catholic doctrine, and of an apostolical church. No objection can be taken to the terms employed, if the meaning be made to harmonize with the expressions. But how is it that we hear so little respecting primitive and apostolical religion, as such? The quality of the piety existing amongst the flock may be whatever circumstances may make it, for any care that is manifested by the new controversialists to prove or to cause *it* to be primitive and apostolic. Why do they not attempt to show that in all places, in all ages,

and under all possible varieties of events, the *divine-right* system which they claim to possess, and that exclusively, has always filled the world with sound piety and Christian holiness? That which is primitive and apostolic must, in our humble apprehension, agree to the first model, not merely in orders, offices, and supposed vocation, as certain and never-failing channels of grace and salvation; but in its fruits and effects. How can the *causal* means be primitive, if the issue is not such? There is such a thing as an apostolical church in living faith, as well as in written creeds; in piety, holiness, love, and sacred joys, as well as in inanimate and material forms and ceremonies; in active zeal, charity, and exertions to promote spiritual religion amongst the flock, and the salvation of the lost, as well as in adherence to an ecclesiastical form. If the living effects and fruits which flow from true and scriptural Christianity are not found connected with that which now pretends to be primitive, we have reason to conclude that *the catholic church*, as the Establishment now arrogates to be, in exclusion to all others, is not, in fact, so purely and perfectly a part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ as it vainly imagines.

Without indulging in any fond conceits in the use of the terms, we claim to be both catholic and apostolic, or rather scriptural, on the ground both of vocation and fruit. If our friends, or our enemies, will go with us to the times of the Apostles, we hail them as companions; we walk with them over this sacred, this scriptural ground with delight, as brethren beloved. But if they descend two or three centuries lower down, perambulate the scenes of folly, superstition, false doctrine, and incipient Popery therein presented, and call these *catholic and apostolic;* why, then we separate. In plain truth, Methodism is a spiritual and religious *entity*, and is constantly growing and expanding. This work must have a cause and origin of some kind, good or evil: its friends and supporters claim for it a divine designation, and consider it the work of God; its enemies deny the claim. We appeal from reasonings to facts, and believe that these facts are in agreement with God's gracious mode of working in all similar cases, and especially in planting the first churches; the fruits of the whole are identical with those which are narrated in the doctrines, ministerial labours, discipline, and experience of the New-Testament churches; and, to complete the case, it is seen that the means were in no respect dissimilar to those which were employed in the first ages. "*The same fountain cannot send forth bitter streams and sweet;*" and hence we are obliged to infer that this is the finger of God.

III. AT THIS STAGE OF OUR SUBJECT IT IS REQUISITE TO APPLY THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION: "LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME THING."

1. "*Let us mind the same thing,*" namely, the promotion of experimental religion,

(1.) As the true and legitimate end of the Gospel institution.

The salvation of mankind is the issue proposed by the whole economy of Christianity. In concurrence with this primary purpose of the death of our Lord, and the establishment of his church, our fathers only sought to bring guilty sinners to the exercise of faith in his name, and to the enjoyment of his grace. This was the great first principle on which they invariably acted in all their movements: economical arrangements were only considered as secondary to this. Theoretical and political Christians have invariably reversed this order; and have propounded their platform as the first in time, in importance, and in its claims to the fealty of their disciples. In the New-Testament narrative, we hear little or nothing respecting the progress of events, but the number of the converted, their spiritual state, their union in societies for religious exercises, the outpourings of the Holy Spirit on their meetings, their simple participation of the Lord's supper, and their zealous exertions for mutual support, and the extension of the "*common salvation.*" Religion itself was the inspiring spirit of order and discipline. The inward, hidden, and divine life, imparted by the truth and grace of the Gospel, created the external economy, and not the economy the life. Experimental piety was the first in order, and the discipline of the church the second.

This was the rule on which our fathers acted. Their prayers, itinerant labours, privations, and sufferings, had this one object, to "*save souls from death.*" Their style of preaching, as to doctrine, address, and manner; their establishment of private and separate meetings for prayer, exhortation, and mutual interchanges of experience; and their pastoral care, either of the societies as a whole, or their visitations in the midst of contumely and reproach: all proposed this as the important and happy result. They exulted over the conversion of sinners, they bore patiently the infirmities of the weak, they sought the backsliders with lingering pity, and their whole concern was to present to God as great a number of believers in Christ as possible, "*without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.*" No inclemency of weather, no abuse of mobs, no length or dreariness of rough and rugged roads, and no physical dangers and suffering, could damp their ardour, or cause them to turn aside from their well-understood path of duty.

Let us imitate our fathers in this the first obligation of the ministry. Any church must decay, when its aggressive, evangelizing, and, in the sense of conversion, proselyting spirit is lost; and no church can decline whilst this is sedulously regarded. The masses of people constituting nations may remain and increase; and these being

considered as nominal members of an Establishment, such a church may be esteemed as full and prosperous, irrespective of their piety or accessions by the modes referred to. But a purely spiritual and voluntary body occupies a very different position; and what is to keep up its efficiency, but the influx of new members? Even its own children, born in its bosom, baptized by its Ministers, and educated in its schools, must remain in its outer courts, unless they manifest the evidences of at least a desire "*to flee from the wrath to come.*" Hence, amongst ourselves, the places of the dead, the losses by backsliders, the rents made by the changes and fluctuations of population, can only be supplied by a continued accession of new converts, brought to God by the faithful and successful preaching of the Gospel.

But motives drawn from the desire to fill up our ranks will not be sufficient, and, destitute of higher considerations, may be questioned as to their legitimacy. The love of God, and of the souls of mankind, must continue to be the moving spring of our ministerial exertions. Lower feelings are unworthy of the sacred office which we hold; higher ones cannot occupy and fill the human mind. Well may those considerations which drew from the bosom of God the unbounded love of redemption, brought the Saviour from heaven, caused him to bleed and die on the cross, and led to the establishment of the Christian kingdom in the midst of miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, draw forth the highest charity and energies of man. To cherish a deep sense of the importance of leading sinners to Christ, and, instrumentally, of opening to them the treasures of the Gospel, will keep every thing else in its place. Life, simplicity, energy, pathos, will follow. Ministers only need to be adequately impressed with two sentiments, to induce untiring zeal: The first, the danger of men in their sins; the second, the value of the blessings of the Gospel. Only let the misery of man "*without God*" be felt; his immortality, his high destiny, his moral consciousness, his need of a resting-place, his perturbed feelings, his untamed passions, his slavery to sin, and his exposure to final and irretrievable ruin, be fully admitted; and, under such views and impressions, Ministers must be "*instant in season and out of season.*" Then, again, let the grace, freeness, and sufficiency of the Gospel, as a remedy, be constantly present to the mind; that the will of God is the present salvation of all, that Christ died to procure it, and that the ministry is "*the ministry of reconciliation;*" and this double impression must prevent all dry formality, curious speculation, fictitious ornament, and, in fact, cause preaching and exertions to become a question of life and death.

(2.) "*Let us mind the same thing,*"—namely, the salvation of men,—as the greatest possible issue of the Gospel.

No view of Christianity is so magnificent and sublime as in its saving effects. Many blessings of great consequence to mankind, and highly beneficial in their mental, domestic, and social states, flow from the Gospel; but its highest purpose is the salvation of the soul. Indeed, it may be affirmed, that the spirit and power of even this secondary happiness is, in the first instance, laid in experimental religion. That improvement of man which relates to the present life, must have a moral basis; and this, again, must receive its principles from the word of God, and its capacity for good from his grace. But the purely spiritual life is much the highest view that can be taken of his case. On the principle of the moral nature, religious capabilities, hopes, and, above all, the immortal destiny of the human family, it will follow, that the greatest blessing which can be conferred, is that religion which meets all these claims and fills up these mighty wants. We know, from what we see and feel, that the real elements of happiness or misery in the present life are moral. It is true that physical causes operate upon the *physical* nature of man, and, through his material organization, upon the *mental;* and also on those sentiments and feelings which are spiritual. But these are only the aggravation, not the innate and original cause, of these painful sensations. The primary evil lies deeper than the play of external influences, and the good which is its remedy must be equally deep. Man is in sin, and is restless, unhappy, full of trouble, mental suffering, and fearful forebodings, in consequence of his guilt. To arrest the sinner in his career of folly—to lead him to repentance—to turn him to God—to open in his heart the power and triumphs of faith—to conduct him to Christ—to bring him to enjoy all the blessings of redeeming love—to train him up in Christian holiness—to pour upon his bewildered mind the hopes of a future life—and to impart all the joys and consolations of present grace:—are certainly the highest results of the truth and ordinances of the Gospel.

No ministry or church ought to be satisfied with its operations without these fruits. Every thing in Christianity is established to effect great results. An administrative character belongs to all the means established in the kingdom of God; and if the effects designed and promised do not flow from the working of a particular church-system, it is to be presumed, either that it is unscriptural in its doctrines and ordinances, or that the spirit of the whole is opposed to the end proposed.

The true value and real nature of both the ministry and the ordinances of the church can only be estimated by the test of this principle. How great is an office and a service which stands connected with the designs of the death of our Lord, and the grace and power of his mediatorial throne! "*For the joy that was set before him,*" he "*endured the cross, despising the shame, and*

is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. xii. 2.) The ministry coincides with this high purpose. "*All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.*" (2 Cor. v. 18, 20.) "*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*" (2 Cor. vi. 1.) "*Who also hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*" (2 Cor. iii. 6.) "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) "*He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*" (Matt. x. 40.) These and similar expressions indicate the high nature of the ministry of the Gospel. The end proposed by the death and mediation of our Lord, as well as the introduction of the dispensation of the Spirit, and the ordination of men to this office, are one and the same. To bring "*many sons unto glory, the Captain of our salvation*" was "*made perfect through suffering;*" (Heb. ii. 10;) and, in a subordinate sense, the same is contemplated by the preaching of the word, and the administration of ordinances. This is the most important and valuable result that can possibly be reached by religion. He who is instrumental in saving a soul accomplishes the greatest work that can be accomplished,—we do not say by man,—for it cost God his highest love to do this. The ecclesiastical scheme, the canonical laws, the economical and disciplinary regulations, of a church, are its mere masonry to keep out the wind and weather, or to mark the line on which its operations may be most usefully conducted. The incense within, produced by the fervent prayers, the faithful preaching, and the devout worship,—all accompanied by the blessed effusions of the Holy Spirit,—constitutes the real life and power of the church. And this issuing in the preparation of a countless multitude for, and their admission into, the kingdom of heaven, is the great consummation contemplated in the mighty means employed.

This is the object at which, in imitation of our fathers, we are to aim. An extended religious hierarchy, unless occupied and filled by a corresponding number of believing men, saved in the Lord, and exhibiting the graces, and attending to all the works, of Christian piety, is like a splendid burial-place;—scientifically laid out, it may be, covered with verdure, ornamented with every variety of plant and shrub;—but still, merely a place of sepulture, where all that is seen of

man is the record of his once having lived, and the mute, cold, and soul-less effigy of his material being. On the other hand, a church which embraces in its pale a large number of happy disciples, filled with the love of God, and performing the functions of the spiritual life, is as a country tenanted by living men; rendered vocal by their praises, fruitful by their active and continued labours, and manifesting the characteristic air and features of an impassioned sensibility and happiness. Next to heaven, this is the highest dwelling-place of God.

No man ever had a commission from God to preach his truth, (or, having received it, has lost his calling,) if souls are not saved by his labours. He, on the other hand, who is successful in this, and consequently kindles a flame of sacred light in the church in which he ministers, may well be thankful and satisfied with his lot. He is doing God's greatest work; compared with which every thing else is merely "*hewing wood and drawing water*" for the service of his temple.

(3.) This attempt so to administer the truth as to save lost mankind, must be prosecuted as absolutely essential.

The moral condition of the human family demands, and always will demand, this effort to lead them to salvation. The fact, that the whole race is brought into the world in a fallen state; that all are "*born in sin and shapen in iniquity;*" and that every one, in consequence of the corruption and taint of original depravity, is "*a child of wrath*;" makes it necessary that the healing remedies of the Gospel should be continuously applied. If we imagine that the advancement of society, even in its most refined and cultivated forms, is of such a nature as to make it unnecessary to preach the most elementary truths in the clearest and plainest manner possible, we have been "*deceived by science, falsely so called.*" If, again, we so hold the initiatory sacrament of baptism, as to confer, certainly and necessarily, the blessings of justification and regeneration, to be ratified and perpetuated by the Lord's supper, and thus fail to make conversion necessary in all, we most certainly misinterpret the meaning of those sacred ordinances, and endanger the salvation of mankind. No; the fountain of original sin is not yet dried up; it sends forth its bitter waters still; and they are as deep, as wide, and as turbid as ever. The non-necessity of the Gospel, in its clearest light and richest grace, would suppose a reversal of the primitive curse. This has not taken place, and never will, till the trial of the world ends. The present and all succeeding generations have, and will continue to have, the stamp of original depravity upon them; will be the alienated children of God; will manifest the accustomed "*enmity*" of "*the carnal mind;*" and be found "*dead in trespasses and in sins.*" Yes; the world is full of the dead and the dying. The Saviour, the fountain of regene-

ration, the doctrine of faith and justification, are, and ever will be, as necessary as when these great mercies were first made known. Polish man as you may, nothing can save him but the grace of God.

This forms the ground of an urgent necessity for the faithful preaching of the whole "*Gospel of the blessed God.*" The economy of Christianity is to be considered in the light of an ever-perfect and present provision for the evils and miseries of a fallen and ruined world. With the poison and pain of a mortal malady, it is of the highest mercy that a healing remedy is provided. But this only becomes effective when it is applied. The business of the ministry and of the ordinances of the church, is to open and bring near the grace provided.

The Gospel itself insists, in the most strenuous manner, on the danger of man in an unconverted state, as well as the absolute necessity, in all, of faith and pardon. "*There is none righteous, no, not one. There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" (Rom. iii. 10, 22, 23.) "*The wages of sin is death.*" (Rom. vi. 23.) "*He that believeth not is condemned already.*" (John iii. 18.) "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke xiii. 3.) "*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt. xviii. 3.) These are the unequivocal declarations of Scripture respecting those who are destitute of an interest in the provisions of the covenant of grace. No means can reach this case, but such as reverse it. The impenitent must be brought to repentance; the unrighteous, to attain the righteousness of faith; the "*carnal,*" and those who are "*sold under sin,*" to the fountain of regeneration; the unholy and unclean to "*the blood which cleanses*" from all sin; and those who are living estranged from God, "*through the ignorance that is in them,*" to the possession of his love, and a joyful fellowship in the service of his house.

To the extent of this, the dangers and evils of sin are removed; and (fearful to think!) the rest of mankind are living under all the rigour of the law. Surely this consideration ought to induce all who are engaged in seeking the lost souls of men, to "*work while it is day.*" Etiquette and order are things lighter than air, when placed in contrast with this imperative obligation. This is the first great principle of Christianity. It is, in fact, the one rule of this merciful system; it transcends all other considerations, and sets them aside, if they stand in its way, as "*wood, hay, and stubble.*" This was the great Gospel-law, on which our fathers acted. Their object was one—to save souls from eternal misery. When this presented itself, in all its vividness, to their believing and ardent minds, they did not "*confer with flesh and blood,*" court the countenance of the

great, parley with human authority, ask if the duty harmonized with the "*traditions of the elders,*" or ran in a parallel line with the canons of the Church. They broke these "*withs*" and "*bands*" in sunder at once, and "rushed into every open door," to proclaim the Saviour to lost mankind. If we possess the grace to emulate their example, and tread in their footsteps, the conversion of men from sin to God will be the first and the last object of our ministry, and of all our exertions.

(4.) We are under obligation to "*mind the same thing,*"—namely, the promotion of vital piety,—as a mark of fidelity to our trust and to God.

When true churches have fallen, they have been unfaithful to first principles and primitive usage. All reformation has turned on the point of restoring the doctrines and worship of the church to their scriptural simplicity. Had Christian churches been faithful to the truth, to their vocation, and to the legitimate objects of their institution, the frightful enormities which were perpetrated in the Christian name would have been avoided, and long before the present period, the world would have been filled with the sound of salvation. How admonitory is the history of the church! Its apostasies, heresies, disunion, sloth, avarice, cruelties, and abominable corruptions, stand out as a beacon on the shores of a sea as dangerous and full of shoals to us as to them. May God give us grace to take the warning, and avoid their doom!

That a blessing has rested on our doctrines and system of operations, *we know;* though others may doubt, and, indeed, contradict and deny. God has affixed his signet,—we do not shrink from the responsibility of saying,—*openly, visibly, palpably,* to the truths delivered amongst us, on a scale as wide and varied as in any portion of the modern church; we think, much more so. What are the fruits and beauties which adorn the earth, but a public, obvious, and sensible proof that the God of nature is living in her domains, touching every spring and law of life, causing the "*little hills to drop fatness,*" "*the valleys to sing for joy,*" and crowning the teeming year with his goodness? In like manner, when we behold the soul adorned with Christian graces, the word of the Gospel "*running and being glorified,*" outpourings of the Spirit vouchsafed, and tens of thousands brought into the faith and liberty of God's people, it would be next to blasphemy to deny that this is the work of God.

A full and firm adherence to the first and principal objects of this work, if our inference be true, is no other than faithfulness to God. He has either committed a "*dispensation of the Gospel*" to us, or not: if he has done so, then it behoves us to "*hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love;*" if not, then our cause must sink, as all religious outbreaks do which rest not upon the

true foundation. "*Perilous times*" have overtaken us; and our obligations are more onerous, if possible, than ever. We need feel no surprise, if our cause, in its doctrinal system, its church order, and its very objects and purposes, be subjected to a fiery ordeal. Certainly, if the remarkable and portentous movement now going on, be permitted to follow up its career, and achieve its object, we cannot possibly avoid coming into direct and palpable collision. The two systems are the very antipodes of each other. The question to be solved by the history of a few years is, whether our community, in unison with other evangelical bodies, will have the piety, strength of principle, humble faith, self-denying spirit, and fidelity to God, to maintain our faith inviolate in the midst of this swelling flood. If it shall please God to give us this grace, a new and most important service, for the general interests of religion, will be added to the past, and somewhat different to any hitherto performed. WHY SHOULD WE EITHER HIDE THE TRUTH FROM OURSELVES, OR HESITATE TO ANNOUNCE IT? —IF THIS CHURCH, IN CONNEXION WITH THE OTHER PARTIES REFERRED TO, DO NOT EXERT ITSELF, FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL, IN THEIR SIMPLICITY AND POWER, THERE IS EVERY PROBABILITY THAT THE NATION MUST, ERE LONG, FALL AGAIN UNDER THE DOMINION OF FALSEHOOD AND SUPERSTITION. The silence of the State; the flimsy apologetical language, rather than dignified reproof, administered on the part of the Bishops; their positive countenance of the PRINCIPLES of the Tractarian scheme; the zeal and fanaticism of the young blood of the Church, which must influence the next generation; the apostasies of the Clergy that have taken place, and are hourly going on; and then, the natural fondness of human nature for novelty, when it panders to its pride:—we say, all these considerations lead us to the deep conviction, that the maintenance of the truth of God, and the liberties of his people, REST IN OTHER HANDS THAN IN THOSE OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH, EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF A VERY SMALL REMNANT, WHO REFUSE TO BOW THE KNEE TO THIS NEW INCARNATION OF BAAL. May we and other evangelical bodies be found faithful witnesses for Christ!

2. But in minding the same thing, namely, the salvation of mankind, as first in importance, and imperative in obligation, it is essential to "*walk by the same rule.*"

(1.) Let us still exhibit the cross and offices of our Saviour clearly and fully. This is an essential rule.

We have no right to expect the same results as were secured by the labours of our predecessors, unless we employ the same means. Our ministry must be rich, powerful, effective, and saving, in proportion as we proclaim "*Christ, and him crucified.*" We must recollect that success rests on the divine blessing; so that the question, as to the

necessity of preaching the cross, must be determined by the place it occupies in the economy of our salvation. If we inquire, What doctrines are found to receive the divine sanction, in such manner as to bring about the great spiritual objects which are contemplated in the Gospel? it will be found that they have always been those of which the cross is the centre-truth. Human opinion has in all cases determined otherwise. It has generally been thought prudent and expedient to begin a course of teaching (especially the ignorant and vicious) with the elements of moral truth, the divine attributes, the obligations and details of the law, or the adoption of some kind of scenic and pictorial teaching, as is now attempted to be re-introduced for the purpose of conveying instruction to the ignorant. Facts oppose these theories altogether. Effects do unquestionably follow the adoption of any one of these modes of operation; but, then, are they *the effects* proposed by the Gospel? Rationalism may spring from one class of means, and superstition from another; and either of these may become widely spread, take deep root, and hold millions of men for ages in their iron grasp, impress them with their own respective moral lineage, and fix their destiny; but what are their characteristics? Are the people penitent, pardoned, regenerate, holy, devoted to God's service, and full of faith and good works? These are the fruits contemplated by the preaching of Christian truth, and the administration of the means of grace. But they are never found in union with the theories mentioned, when those theories are put into a working form, and made to operate as church-systems. On the other hand, it has never been known, that the atonement of our Lord has been proclaimed, in connexion with the other truths flowing from that, but great and powerful effects have followed; and that, in the particulars specified, men have been saved from their sins.

This is accounted for on the ground of the position of the cross in the scheme of our salvation, and the consequent bestowment of grace from God, through it, as the medium. In this view of the case, the death of Christ is not a mere instrument by which a skilful and eloquent Preacher may deal most effectually with the feelings of his auditory; but it is the point where God meets the sinner, and, consequently, to which the sinner must be drawn, in order that He may so meet him. This is the true reason for the faithful enunciation of this doctrine, and the true ground of its usefulness. When does God manifest himself in blessing? It will be said, Whenever he, the sinner, believes. But it may be asked, In what? Not in any vagaries which man in his officiousness may think right to set up, but in this one truth,—Christ crucified for sin. No faith but this is saving; and hence the infinite importance of teaching it on the largest possible scale.

Other sentiments, even when drawn from the word of God, if placed

in an isolated form, and disjointed from the cross of our Lord, are proved in the history of Christianity to be utterly unavailing in respect of any saving result. It follows from this, that no one can do the work of God, but by clearly, constantly, and fully proclaiming the doctrine of the atonement, without any *reserve*. Our fathers were distinguished for this. In their circumstances, their preaching must of necessity have been destitute of the attractions of erudition and ornament, culled from the philosophers and poets; and yet it proved to be full of power, and great were the effects. When we inquire as to the cause of this, the answer is at hand: They every where exhibited the doctrine of Christ crucified, drew the people to faith in the Saviour, and, on the ground of that faith, God bestowed the blessings of his salvation. Let us imitate them in this, and we need be under no apprehension as to the decay of our cause, or the want of fruit in our ministry.

(2.) Let us place the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence prominently before the attention and faith of the people, in agreement with the position it really holds in the economy of our salvation. This is essential in carrying on the work of God.

The Holy Spirit's offices stand in necessary connexion with the personal glories and atonement of our Lord. Regeneration, with its collateral fruits, is as much a doctrine of the New Testament as justification itself. But this involves the necessity of the Spirit's grace and power. Indeed, none of the practical blessings of the Gospel can possibly be secured without the presence and powerful operation of this Divine Agent. The truth itself, and the administration of the sacraments, though in their institution scriptural, must fail of producing saving results, unless the dispensation of the Spirit accompany the external means. How can the blind see, the dead live, and the polluted heart—the fountain and spring of all moral emotion, feeling, and passion—send forth the pure streams of religious joy, love, and holiness, but by the "*washing of regeneration*" through the Holy Spirit? The whole scheme of scriptural piety pre-supposes this divine influence; and to go about the task of saving lost mankind, without adopting means to secure His effusions, and prominently setting forth His glories, must prove utterly futile.

We are assured, from the nature of the work itself, the difficulties to be overcome, and the fruits which have followed, that, in an eminent sense, our past successes and prosperity have been spiritual in their cause. Nothing less than the fulfilment of the promise made to his first Ministers by Christ, repeated in the case of our fathers, could have either fitted them for their ministry, or rendered it so remarkably powerful as we know it to have been. The great movements which took place under their word, when multitudes wept aloud in penitent sorrow, fell in prostrate devotion before the Lord, cried

out in agony and affliction of heart, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" and when, at the same time and place, this scene of sorrow was often suddenly turned into joy, the night into day, and the sense of guilt, bondage, and danger, into the happiness of a conscious pardon, and all the characteristics of a new life;—were deemed disorderly, fanatical, and enthusiastic, as the works and fruits of the Spirit must be, by those who judge of religion by the common sentiments of nature. But in the midst of great reproach, we have invariably adhered to the doctrine in question, and have no hesitation in confessing, that the truth or falsehood of our claims, the reality or fictitious nature of our work, and the divinity or human origin of our whole system, must depend, first, on the existence and office of the Holy Ghost, and then on His efficient operation in our ministry and ordinances. If his influence be denied in our work, then the whole must be accounted for on some other principles; and we ask the objector to furnish us with his solution of the case, and his array of agencies in the accomplishment of this spiritual creation. Deny the Spirit's grace in the progress of Methodism, and the whole sinks into a merely human enterprise; admit the claim, and it stands out as a genuine work of God. Our antagonists take the first alternative; we adopt the latter. They account for the rise and progress of the most remarkable revival of religion in modern times, on the ground of some favourable incidents, adaptation of circumstances, state of the public mind, and the peculiar fitness of the agents engaged to bring about the result. All these are utterly insufficient, if it be granted that conversions were effected; and if they were not, can our opponents tell us what the change from sin to holiness, which took place in thousands of instances, and was sustained by a consistent life for many years, really was, and how brought about?

By a series of well-established facts, we know that our work, from the beginning, has been carried on by the influence of the Holy Spirit, granted in silent and gentle power, or in rich and glorious effusions, according to his own will. We must still depend on the same divine agency. To secure this, our doctrines must be true, simple, plain, and exhibit the whole work of Christ; our worship must embrace all the objects of such an exercise, "*in spirit and in truth;*" our church-order must be scriptural, and only comprehend and propose to carry out the spiritual designs of Christianity; our people themselves must live in faith, prayer, self-denial, purity, good works, and charity; and, withal, honour must be done to the Holy Ghost, by expressly invoking his blessing, and yielding to his teaching and grace.

A word of caution, it is hoped, may not be considered unseasonable. We are, and probably shall be, exposed to danger on this

point. The danger referred to is exhibited in the history of all times and all churches. It is that of ceasing, practically, to depend on the Spirit's influence, as the result of something like mature hierarchical arrangements. It may have happened in the case of individual Ministers, when young, inexperienced, dependent, and full of fear and apprehension, that they were diligent in prayer for the assistance and blessing of the Holy Spirit; but, as time advanced, as stores of knowledge were acquired, and a facility in preaching obtained, there may have been less of this. The result is seen. The early ministry of such men will have been eminently useful, in the conversion of sinners; and the latter part of it, by reason of their not enjoying the same "*unction of the Holy One*," comparatively barren. The same may be the case with churches. When despised, persecuted, poor, few in number, and surrounded by every form of difficulty, they are, of necessity, driven to first principles—to cry to God, repose in his power, and expect the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of their borders, by the power of the Holy Ghost. But as they grow in numbers, respectability, and wealth; as their organization, religious ordinances, and means of grace, become more perfect and regular; and, moreover, as verbal definitions, canonical laws, ecclesiastical arrangements, and the dress and adorning of the system become more and more attractive; it is extremely possible for such a community partially to lose sight of the necessity of spiritual influence in the operations of the church, and to depend mainly on the efficiency of the machinery. Let us avoid this danger. Whilst we are grateful to God for our increased facilities for worship, and the enjoyment of full religious services, let us cherish the same humble dependence on the effusions of the Holy Ghost, as if we went out, as our fathers did, without "*scrip*" or "*sandals*," and with nothing but the truth in our hands. And, besides this, we are taught by our own history not to prescribe modes of operation to the Spirit; not to mark out channels for the water of life; nor to imagine that the "*wind*" must necessarily blow from one quarter. Let us remember, "*the wind bloweth where it listeth.*" If God chooses to disturb the still, calm, quiet duties and devotions of any particular place, by pouring out his Spirit, so as to awaken "*the dead in sin*," and by this to produce opposition, and the old complaint of "enthusiasm," let us not be ashamed of the imputation. On the other hand, it is essential to our prosperity, the perpetuity of our work, the salvation of the wicked, and the ultimate end we propose,—the conversion of the world,—that the Holy Ghost should exhibit his power constantly amongst us. This must be sought by every legitimate means; and He must not be "*grieved*," or "*quenched*," by a fastidious fear of offending the cold, sober, and sceptical portions of men around, who, when they succeed in driving good men from one point of practical orthodoxy, never rest

till they have driven them from the next, and then the following, till the church sinks into perfect apathy and death.

(3.) Let us continue to proclaim, constantly, as on the house-top, the doctrine of salvation by grace.

Grace, we mean, in contradistinction to works. This is not only necessary to the evangelical character of a church's creed; but its faithful declaration is indispensable to the success of its exertions to save the souls of men. It was a bold and noble task, undertaken on the part of our fathers, in their day, to preach a gratuitous salvation, confronted as they were at every point, and in every place, by a host of law-and-merit men. Nearly the whole theology of those times was imbued by this spirit, and its authors were prepared to defend it against the intruders, who by this one doctrine sapped the foundation of the *fair* fabric.

The true question is, whether, in treating with a sinner, on the matter of his pardon and sanctification, God acts in the plenitude of his own grace, or on the ground of man's personal state, as to his obedience, works, innate fitness, or observance of sacramental duties. This is to be considered as a fact, on one side or the other; and our exertions must agree to the truth as it may be fixed in the economy of Christianity, and revealed in holy Scripture. It is most evident, that all ministerial and church exertions to accomplish the ends proposed by the Gospel, must depend, for their success, on their harmony with the established order of the economy itself.

We are speaking of legitimate effects; not of all kinds of influence and power over the masses of mankind. It has happened in the course of the history, for instance, of the popish hierarchy, that the end sought has been secured. The advocates of that great and dire apostasy have fixed on this as an argument of its being the pure catholic church, to which our Lord made his promises of perpetuity, universality, and that he, by his Sacred Spirit, would continue to be with it "*to the end of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Here, it is argued, is a visible Christian power which has existed from the beginning of Christianity, possessing one Head, an universal ecclesiastical authority, a regular succession of Priests, the true sacraments, and whose doctrines have been professed by unnumbered nations. On account of this power are claimed all the attributes and rights of the one, true, and only church of God. We ask, whether the gracious ends proposed by Christianity have been accomplished by the doctrines and offices of this Church? or whether it presents itself in the aspect of a mere organization of men, under the domination of superstition? When we enter this splendid temple, and examine its pretensions by the infallible test of Scripture, we find that, instead of Christian fruit, we have a system of gross and palpable idolatry, and every corresponding enormity. On this and other evidence, we are

led to see, that great effects may follow a professedly religious establishment, and yet that those effects may not be Christian in their character. To secure these, it is clear that the means employed must be in harmony with the manner in which God produces them.

Now it only requires an impartial examination of the word of God to perceive that salvation is of grace. "*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*" (Titus ii. 11.) "*We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" (Eph. i. 7.) "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*" (Titus iii. 5.) This is the general language of the Gospel message. It exhibits a provision, a law, a settled rule, in the kingdom of God. This cannot be altered by man. Teaching of another sort may be resorted to; and, in fact, the utmost pains have been taken to establish other doctrines, to the utter repudiation of this. Have they succeeded? Poor, guilty, and polluted sinners have been trained, drilled, and exhorted, in every form of language, to look for the blessing of God by the observance of ceremonies, the works of law, and self-mortification. Has God met them at these shrines of human superstition, and conferred upon them the forgiveness of sin and the gift of his Holy Spirit? If effects are to determine the question, we may know infallibly that he has not. They remain still in the misery and pollution of sin; and though they exercise some kind of unintelligible dependence on their performances, yet the salvation they expect is always distant, and they are taught to decry the notion of present effects. Not so when the doctrine of grace is faithfully proclaimed. Led to God by a system of teaching which represents him as a God of love, "*pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin,*" from the free and spontaneous motions of his own grace, He meets them in the fulness of his mercy, and in Christ Jesus freely justifies and saves them. Let us still adhere to this doctrine, publish it abroad, and endeavour, by all the means in our power, to cause it to be received. It has hitherto been our life, our power, our means of success. Nothing can supersede it. With it, we, and others of like creed, may still move the world; without it, we must sink into oblivion!

(4.) Let us continue, in all our labours for the salvation of men and the triumphs of the Gospel, to trust to the sufficiency of faith.

Keeping the end in view, all along referred to,—the induction of sinners into the privileges and blessings of the Gospel,—the doctrine of faith must be the main instrument. The point on which it is desired that attention may be fixed is this:—that the Apostles who finished the canon of holy Scripture, not only embodied this truth as of fundamental importance in the sacred records, but employed it without *reserve*, in their labours for the conversion of men. Their

whole teaching was in exact accordance with this one address: "*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*" (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) This was their great rule, and in imitation of this apostolic practice, our predecessors adopted the same line of proceeding. The law, it is true, whereby is "*the knowledge of sin,*" and the obligations of repentance and of works meet for repentance, were every where insisted upon; but, in the matter of pardon and the attainment of "*the liberty of the sons of God,*" faith alone was taught. This was the great lever which, in the hands of the first Preachers of Christian doctrine, moved the world; and which on the last revival of religion produced so deep an impression. Without the application and constant use of this doctrine, any church must either sink into some kind of heresy, or assume some form of external superstition. Purity and life cannot be conserved, but by a constant union with Christ, and the rich reception of the grace of his Spirit; and this union can only be maintained by faith. "*The just shall live by faith.*" (Heb. x. 38.)

If we "*stand in the old paths,*" and address ourselves to the duty of seeking the conversion of mankind, laying aside every other subject, and do this in the proper sense of the expression; then we shall be true to this principle, because we shall find that nothing else will accomplish the end we seek. Let us not be diverted from this by the consideration, that great numbers of our people are so far advanced in Christian attainments, as to make it inexpedient to keep up this kind of ministry amongst them. The object is to bring into the experience of saving grace those who are destitute of these blessings; and it would be wrong to neglect the state of those who *are not* saved, by the consideration of those who *are*. In old congregations, as well as in new places, if the "*edification of the body of Christ*" be sought, by the constant accession of new converts, then this light must be kept up "*to guide their feet into the way of peace.*" Preaching the doctrine of faith keeps the door of our Lord's house constantly open; the way to his kingdom clear and well defined; presents the blessings of pardon and acceptance as constantly practicable; and exhibits the grace of God, and the passion and merit of Christ, as in perspective, to the sight and hopes of sinners.

This is the case with regard to the church in her stated and general ordinances and services. But, in addition to this, Christian bodies, with their Ministers and means, ought to go much beyond the line of their own established services, in seeking the salvation of the lost. The darkest places of our own population ought to be entered; the most profligate and abandoned ought to be sought; the church-neglecting and out-door masses, which constitute the vast majority,

ought to be visited, in their neglected state, by the pervading and aggressive calls of the Gospel. And then, beyond our own limits lie the dark dominions of Popery, Mahomedanism, and Pagan idolatry. How are these wants to be met? We have only one mode of successful enterprise, and that is, in continuing to imitate the example of the first Evangelists, and our own predecessors, in proclaiming the freeness of God's grace to be received by faith. All prosperity and success depend not merely on holding the truth, as a dogma, but on the *use* made of this doctrine in the services of the church; the public preaching of the word; and labours employed to carry out the purposes of the Gospel, in the conversion of the world of ungodly men. This is the truth which God has ever sanctioned by the effusions of his blessed Spirit; and without these influences, churches can neither preserve their vitality, nor fulfil the divine purpose in the salvation of those who are "*ignorant and out of the way.*"

(5.) Finally, let us rest on the perfection of the Gospel in itself, and the means it employs, guarding against all refinements, or the employment of human expedients to accomplish the Lord's work.

Nothing can be conceived of more importance than this. It is just as possible to carry expediency into religion as into the business of civil life. There will always be the temptation to this. To make the teaching and ordinances of the Gospel palatable to the age, to adjust it to circumstances, to render it attractive and ornamental, and, by adorning it in the dress and colouring of a secular eloquence and external beauty, to endeavour to render it popular and agreeable to public taste;—are dangers to which we, in common with all other Christian bodies, are exposed. There is great plausibility in all this; and when it becomes excessive, the effect is, to put aside the Gospel and service of God, properly considered, and to substitute the shadow for the substance, the *flesh* for the *spirit*, and the human for the divine. The pure and unadorned Gospel is itself the essence of beauty and grandeur. Standing out in its simplicity, mercy, holiness, and hopes, nothing can equal its sublimity. The spiritual glories of Christianity are too ethereal and divine to receive improvement from the human intellect; and, in their unsophisticated truth, they are too powerful to need the ingenuity of man to render them effective. But we are not speaking of Christianity in its abstract verity and beauty, but as the instrument of carrying on God's saving work in the world. We deem the Gospel, independent of any other means, sufficient. It is unquestionably right and necessary, that godly order, discipline, and rules of action should be devised by the church, and observed by its Ministers and people. But what, it may be inquired, is the relation of these things to the truth? Just the same as that of the walls and the different utensils of the temple, to the

fire burning on the altar,—to the divine "*glory shining between the cherubim.*" There could be no religious benefit in the sacred edifice itself, or in the arrangements of the services of religion: the grace of God flowed from the truth taught, the sacrifices presented, the functions of the High Priest,—all typical of the glorious work of Christ. In like manner, however complete the hierarchical arrangements may be in the Christian church, no saving efficacy can attend them, unless the Gospel itself is found there also. If preached in the "*high ways,*" on the mountain's brow, in the streets of our cities, or beneath the shade of spreading trees, this Gospel will still be efficacious to save.

The movement now going on amongst the Tractarians contemplates religious results and benefits, chiefly through the sacraments; and in like manner depreciates the value and efficacy of preaching as a divine ordinance. In what relation does St. Paul place the preaching of the Gospel? He says to the Corinthians, "*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.*" (1 Cor. i. 14—17.) It would be curious to hear those who so strenuously distinguish between the prophetic, and what is called the priestly, functions in the Christian ministry, explain this passage. The pre-eminence is always given to the priestly office; and yet, in opposition to this, St. Paul glories in the fact, that Christ had not sent him to baptize, but to preach! The reason is clear enough: by preaching the truth of God, he had been made instrumental in the salvation of men. To the Ephesian church, he said: "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*" (Eph. i. 13.) Their "*believing,*" their "*salvation,*" their "*sealing,*" arose out of their "*hearing*" the Gospel. In his complaints to the Galatians he adverts to this: "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.*" (Gal i. 6.) And again: "*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Gal. iii. 2.) Here it is evident that this people had been called into the "*grace of Christ*" by that Gospel which they had perverted, and had also received the Spirit by "*the hearing of faith.*" To the Thessalonians he writes: "*For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*" (1 Thess. ji. 13.) To the same people, in his Second Epistle, he says: "*But we*

are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.) They were "*called,*" we see, to all these blessings through the Gospel, which "*worked effectually in them that believed.*" To the Romans the Apostle breaks out into the noble exclamation: "*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*" (Rom. i. 16, 17.) Facts corroborate this doctrine. The impressions wrought on the day of Pentecost, as connected with the outpouring of the Spirit, took place under the preaching of Peter; and when God opened "*the door of faith to the Gentiles*" in the family of Cornelius, it was by the word of the Gospel delivered by the same eminent Apostle.

We may fairly assume from these scriptural examples, that those Ministers who are the most pains-taking Preachers of the word of God, will be the most successful in bringing the lost sheep, for whom the Saviour died, to faith in his name, and the enjoyment of his grace. The uncompromising conduct of our fathers in this, as in other things, is a fine example to us. They trusted in the efficiency of the Gospel in its own truth, divinity, and power; and only combined with its faithful preaching such means as it suggests. There was a directness—what in technical language might possibly be called a dogmatism—in their enunciation of the truth, which left none in the dark respecting its meaning. The thoughtless sinner did not go away complimenting himself that he was not like other men; he was left in no uncertainty as to whether it was his duty to repent and turn to God; the necessity and the marks of the new birth were given, so that none could easily mistake the question; and the present practicability of faith in Christ, and, through that, the attainment of pardon and every other blessing, were pointedly but encouragingly exhibited. Great have been the effects; and similar ones must continue to follow, if we employ the doctrines of the Gospel unmutilated by the inventions of man's wisdom.

We have great advantages in our meditations on these momentous questions, in the circumstance that our system rests on these principles; and in their truth, again, being corroborated by the work of God around us. "*Other men laboured, and we are entered into their labours.*" They have, indeed, in all respects, left us the legacy of a bright example. We are instructed in our present obligations and duties by their spirit, manner of life, preaching, toils, and triumphs; we are led to see the manner in which God blesses and owns the

plans and labours of his servants, in their great success in the conversion of sinners; we are animated and encouraged, by the support given to them in their poverty, privations, and sufferings; we are filled with hope respecting the future, by beholding, from low and insignificant beginnings, an extended, spiritual, and active Christian community, still endeavouring to fulfil the commands of Christ; we derive great advantages from the moral power (next to that of God) which is the combined effect of the wisdom, piety, and evangelical labours of our ancestors; and, above all, we are instructed by the living and dying joys and holiness of a countless host of witnesses to the truth and divinity of the religion we have received ourselves, and are endeavouring to propagate in the world.

Methodism is a great moral creation. Explain its principles as you may, here it stands! What awaits it, we know not; for, who can penetrate the future? With one feeling we are deeply impressed; namely, that at present and in future, the spirit of genuine, scriptural, deep, and devoted piety cultivated by its living disciples, must fix its state. This has ever been its power; and if this be lost, Methodism must dwindle first into a form, then into sectarianism, and expire. Our best light, next to the Bible, is the past history of our own body. We here behold God working in condescending mercy, in making those "*a people who were not a people;*" we see the principles and doctrines of the Gospel illustrated by effects and fruits the most unequivocal; we are made acquainted with its simple efficiency, unaided by the countenance of power, or any other adventitious support; and we behold "*the foolish things of the world confound the wise; weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty; base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.*" (1 Cor. i. 27—29.) Our safety is still to follow the pillar in the wilderness; to "*walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing.*"

PART II.

IN CONSIDERING OUR POSITION AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, IT WILL BE REQUISITE TO EXAMINE THE SUBJECT IN ITS ECCLESIASTICAL OR ECONOMICAL ASPECTS.

It may be proper to premise, that our *status*, in the midst of the general Christianity of the world, has been, and still continues to many observers to be, a perplexing phenomenon,—an inexplicable anomaly: they know not how to classify us, or what to make of us. Popery is very well understood, in the supremacy of its chief; its conclave of Cardinals; its power of the keys; its claim of infallibility; its pretended catholicity; its theological sentiments; its oppressive discipline; and its long history of blood and persecution: but then we are not Papists, and cannot be judged by the rules of this hierarchy. Diocesan Episcopacy, as held by many authorities, is a tangible system. The exclusive government of Bishops; the distinction of the three orders; the apostolical succession; the supposed efficacy of the sacraments from the hands of this order of Priests only; the church, as the only catholic form of Christianity in this country, founded on the *divine-right* principle, to the exclusion of all other Christian communities; are very intelligible points. But we do not fall within these lines of demarcation, and, indeed, have our place assigned us out of the pale of the Church. Presbyterianism, too, possesses its well-defined platform. Its pastorate, assembly, lay-eldership, confession of faith, modes of discipline; are all accurately exhibited. But we cannot be identified with this system in detail, though we are regulated by many of its principles. Independency, in its several communities, and in its all-absorbing suffrage-principle, is comprehensible; but we are not Independents. By reason of our non-identification with these bodies of professed Christians, in their several distinctive and ecclesiastical party-divisions, many of them deny that we are a church at all; and consider us merely as a set of irregular religionists, and if saved at all, it must be on the ground of what they call the uncovenanted mercies of God.

It never occurs to over-zealous and ultra partisans, that, by possibility, there may be *some* truth beyond the limits of their own enclosures. These *one-idea-ed* men do not stop to think, as they cherish their fond but single notion, that there may be both variety and harmony; and, consequently, the mere fact of a community of Chris-

tians not being of their party, is no proof that they have no place in the "*body of Christ;*" or that they are not true churches, or parts of the one true church of the living God. Moreover, it might not be amiss, if those who isolate themselves from the whole of Christianity except their own, were to inquire if their foundation is broad enough to sustain the entire kingdom of God; if the platform they have laid for themselves and their religious operations, is sufficiently extended and expansive to develope the whole truth of God, the mercies of redemption, and his gracious purpose to save the world. But, above all things, it might be useful to all parties who investigate these questions, carefully to distinguish betwixt that which is divine, and that which is human, in connexion with the church. If this were regarded, it would follow, that any Christian body which should faithfully hold the divine and immutable truth of the Gospel, must be of the true church; though in the department which is human, and in which freedom is allowed, it might differ from others. There would be just as much sense in denying that a civil society could not belong either to the community of men or of nations, because they choose to adopt a *costume* different from that of other people, and because in their institutions shades of difference appear on questions of government; as in affirming that bodies of men are not Christian churches, though they hold all "*the truth as it is in Jesus,*" because they do not conform to a set of regulations which have originated in expediency. On this rule of distinguishing the divine from the human, it might be found, on examination, that many of the principles in each existing system of church-order are out of place; and that a new adjustment would be an advantage, and much more in agreement with the whole truth than that held by any of the isolated bodies, calling themselves THE CHURCH.

But this must appear irregular to those who limit all truth to their own foundation. Church-polity can only have for its legitimate purpose, preaching the truth of God, the discipline of the New Testament, feeding the sheep of Christ's flock, and carrying out the purposes of redeeming love in the conversion of the world. This polity is not the church, though it is often so considered; but it is the rule of its government, and the instrument of its action. Is it human, or is it divine? That to which the whole administration of the church relates, as the Gospel itself, the laws of Christ as the rule of life, the sacraments to be administered, is divine. The office, too, of Pastor, Bishop, or Presbyter, as *a generic* function, is divine. But here we stop. The exercise of the church's own liberty, or rather judgment and prudence, begins at this point. What God has absolutely revealed and authoritatively appointed, can be subject to no modification of man. But the mode in which his truth shall be proclaimed, and the discipline of his kingdom carried into effect, not being so limited and defined, some scope for the exercise of judicious

expediency is here allowed. This is a mark of the wisdom of God. How can the same external forms be made to suit every time, place, and people? A great principle may be planted in a soil in which it would be impossible to carry out a perfected institution.

Ecclesiastical arrangements and canons are to be judged of, not by their own intrinsic or independent character, but by their harmony with the doctrines, spirit, and designs of the Gospel. As for instance: a canon which enacted that the Ministers of a particular church should only preach in consecrated places would, we think, contravene the command of Christ to "*preach the Gospel to every creature;*" because these consecrated places will not contain "*every creature,*" and, if they would, they do not attend them. Again: any definition of the sacraments, or even the mode of administering them, which should virtually nullify the doctrine of justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, must be placed in a false position by such a canon, because it opposes the free, present, and universal proclamation of pardon, as found in the Gospel, to be received, not through a sacrament, but through the blood of Christ; not through the consecrated elements, but by believing in his name. In like manner, when an office (as that of Bishop, which in the New Testament is a designation common with that of Presbyter, Pastor, or Minister) is, by human authority, elevated to the position of a distinct and separate ORDER, and that as of *divine right,* including corresponding powers; and then, as the next process, that this office, in its isolated and elevated position, is essential to the very being of a church, to the subordinate orders, to the existence of true and lawful sacraments, and to the administration of discipline; then, it is evident that such office is swollen and distorted, inasmuch as the position it is made to hold, places other arrangements and provisions of the divine economy in subordination to it, while, in truth, they have no such dependence, and cannot be placed under such mere human authority without injury.

This is no fanciful picture. Christianity, in itself so free, so merciful, so simple, and so universal in its designs of good to man, has been narrowed to a system, and that system itself to a set of merely human canons; whilst every operation of truth and religion beyond the limits of this scheme has been denounced as heretical in doctrine, and schismatical in spirit.

Taking the extreme of any system of church-polity found in operation, either at the time of the rise of Methodism, or at present, it might easily be shown that there is ample room for an enlarged basis. The non-adoption of a practical catholicity, by the Protestant churches, at the period of the Reformation, not only gave their arch-enemy a great advantage over them, but circumscribed and fettered their own exertions. Hence the labours of these churches in this

country, and in other places, were bounded by a narrow principle, so as to leave our home-population greatly neglected, and the distant portions of the world nearly altogether unvisited.

A careful analysis of the "*church-principles*" of Methodism will show, that by simply adhering to the grand, fundamental doctrines of the word of God; the ends proposed by Christian discipline; the primary purposes of the Gospel institution; the spiritual characteristics of the church; and by following the precepts and precedents of the Apostles alone, without attempting to define, circumscribe, and limit our polity; we possess a great advantage, in an ample, as well as in a clear basis of operations. But, above all, by working on a *principle*, instead of a set of canons of a circumscribed nature, we are prepared to carry out the great blessings of the Gospel to an illimitable extent.

Moreover, in practice, by acting on the simple plan of adopting absolutely all the verities of the word of God, and things indifferent and human, as wisdom and necessity may dictate, we have the means of working into our church-system many of the most important and valuable elements of other churches, without being identical with any.

We have much of the spirit, and indeed of the order, of a primitive and simple episcopate, without its more modern, and, as we think, injurious encumbrances and limitations. We have, undoubtedly, a large infusion of the Presbyterian leaven, though not, in detail, the entire platform of that system. We have intermixed in our practical operations a large amount of the suffrage-principle, though not, by any means, to the full extent of the expression, *independent and voluntary*, either in our theory or practice. It would be difficult to show that any one of the schemes adverted to is in theory sufficient to bear the weight of the church, as exhibited in the holy Scriptures, or to perform that great task assigned it in the universal triumphs of Christianity through the world. What may be the ultimate position of our own community, with its affiliated branches and indirect influence, it is impossible to foresee. Hitherto, however, our principles have proved to be good in practice; and a great and extended church is found to repose upon them in efficiency and power.

I. LET US EXAMINE THE QUESTION OF OUR ECCLESIASTICAL ECONOMY, BY COMPARING IT WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CHURCH.

1. The primary idea of a church, as furnished by the New Testament, is that of fellowship on the basis of the Christian faith.

We say, "on the basis of the Christian faith," in contradistinction to fellowship founded on an official figment. It is well known that the person or man Peter is considered the "*rock*" on which the Popish Church is built; and as that Church claims to be universal,

it is assumed that the entire, true, and pure catholic church is built on this foundation. In this scheme the church is not made to rest on apostolic truth, but on apostolic authority; and all bodies of Christians, whatever may be their faith and piety, if they cannot trace their origin to this centre of unity and authority at Rome, or refuse to yield allegiance to St. Peter's chair, (which, by-the-by, was never occupied by Peter at all, and is a pure invention and fiction, resting on no valid authority,) then they are held to be no churches, and to possess no Christian rights or privileges. Hence, on the ground that the churches of the Reformation could no longer assent to this principle, but claimed to build their communion on the word of God, instead of the man Peter, and those who arrogate to themselves the title of his successors and the Vicars of Christ on earth; they were excommunicated as heretical and schismatical. The English Church is in this position at this day. The orders of her priesthood are deemed as invalid by the arrogant Papist, as those of the Methodist Minister by the most bigoted Episcopalian. And, moreover, the whole bench of Bishops and Archbishops belonging to the national Establishment are no more considered Bishops by Romanists, than these dignitaries consider the Pastors of their neighbours, the dissenting congregations, as Bishops. All this necessarily arises out of the dogma, that the church is built on the "*rock*" Peter, meaning Peter, not as teaching the doctrines of the Gospel, but as exercising an undivided power, to be transmitted in lineal descent to the occupants of his throne.

The recently-revived doctrine of apostolical succession contains all the falsehood of this principle, as well as its mischievous tendencies, though in a somewhat different form. As it regards the basis of the church, it is as nearly the same as possible; only, instead of making Peter the exclusive "*rock*," they elevate the *apostolical office* to that distinction, taking care, at the same time, to assume that they themselves are the successors of the Apostles. Let the gentlemen of the Tract-school state the matter themselves. In the "Principles" agreed upon at the origin of the movement, they say:—

"(1.) The only way of salvation is partaking the body and blood of our crucified Redeemer.

"(2.) The mean, *expressly authorized by him* for that purpose, is the holy sacrament of his supper.

"(3.) The security, *by him no less expressly authorized*, for the continuance and due application of that sacrament, is the apostolical commission of the Bishops, and, under them, the Presbyters of the church."

This document, it seems, was improved from a previously adopted one, which states the case more nakedly, though, in fact, there is no difference in the doctrines of the two. They say in this paper,—

"(1.) The participation of the body and blood of Christ is *essential* to the maintenance of Christian life and hope in each individual.

"(2.) It is conveyed to individual Christians *only* by the hands of the successors of the Apostles and their delegates.

"(3.) The successors of the Apostles are those who are descended in a direct line from them, by the imposition of hands; and the delegates of these are the respective Presbyters, whom each has commissioned."

Here we have substantially the same doctrine as that which is made the very foundation of Popery. It is true, the word "church" is not used as in the case of the claims for St. Peter as the "*rock;*" but the same thing is reached by another process. The successors of the Apostles are they who alone can validly administer the sacraments; the sacraments are the *only media* of salvation; it is essential that those who are true Christians should partake of the "*body and blood of Christ,*" thus administered; and if they do not, they are not, and cannot be, so saved. Hence the whole church is made to hinge on apostolical succession. Where, then, it may be inquired, is the essential difference between building the church on the Pope, and the Anglican Bishops? The two claims are exactly identical. They equally displace the doctrines of our Lord and his Apostles from the position assigned them in the writings of the New Testament, and build the visible Christian church on an *office* instead of the *truth*.

The doctrine of Scripture is most explicit on the question, and is placed in every possible variety of view. In speaking of the labours of the ministry in the formation of churches and their edification, St. Paul says, "*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.*" (1 Cor. iii. 10.) He then fully indicates the nature of the foundation in question. Is it the apostolic office, to be perpetuated in the Episcopal succession? Just the reverse. "*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" (Verse 11.) Referring to the same subject, he says to the Ephesians: "*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*" (Eph. ii. 19—22.)

It is sufficiently clear from these passages, that the Apostle never dreamt that the Episcopal office—even supposing it was exercised—constituted the foundation of the Christian church. That teaching or doctrine is referred to, is evident, because in one passage the "*Prophets*" as well as the "*Apostles*" are placed in the "*foun-*

dation." These holy men sustained no office in the Christian church, and cannot be said, in any sense, to be united as joint functionaries with the Apostles. But by their inspired writings they may, and in fact do, hold the position of joint witnesses and teachers, with the Apostles, of that full and perfect truth, which the faith of all believers embraces; and, consequently, unitedly, with all that was taught and done by our Lord, constitute the one perfect and secure foundation of the Christian church.

The dogma, that all that is Christian in the world must be united under the authority of the successors of the Apostles, meaning by this, the Pope and his delegates, or the Anglican Bishops and their Presbyters, or those possessing a similar claim, at once unchristianizes all other churches. On this assumption, the Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, and all other religious bodies, are placed beyond the pale of the church catholic; their Ministers have no vocation, their doctrines no saving efficiency, their sacraments no validity; and the ineffably ridiculous, as well as distressingly profane and irreligious conclusion is come to, that all these parties, on the mere ground of their non-conformity to these claims, though otherwise many of them the most holy of men, are not Christians, and their communities are not churches!

It is necessary to go from these absurd opinions and claims of interested partisans, to a consideration of the teaching and testimony of the word of God.

The term "church" is employed, in many places, to designate the united aggregate society of Christians in all times and in all places. As in the celebrated passage,—"*He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Matt. xvi. 15—18.) To Timothy the Apostle says: "*These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" (1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.) To the Colossians: "*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*" (Col. i. 18.) With this agrees his teaching to the Corinthians: "*For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?*" (1 Cor. xi. 18, 22.) Again: "*For as the body is one, and hath many*

members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 27, 28.) Two passages in his Epistle to the Ephesians refer to this view of the church. "*According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*" (Eph. i. 19—23.) Again: "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" (Eph. v. 23—27.)

In these passages, and numerous others, in which the church is spoken of as "*the kingdom of God,*" the "*family of God,*" "*the elect,*" and by similar expressions; the language used is general, and evidently refers to the whole community of Christians. It follows that, on some principle or other, they are one, though divided by language, local residence, the demarcation of kingdoms, and the distance of ages. We see that Christ is the only "*foundation*" and "*Head*" of the church. If so, the union in question is a union on that "*foundation,*" and fellowship with Christ as subordinate members of the body, whilst he is the "*Head.*"

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church by his redemption and his doctrines; the inspired Prophets and Apostles, teaching by his Spirit, in a doctrinal sense only, sharing in this office; and he is the "*Head*" of the church much in the same sense, only the term also conveys the idea of actual government. Now, this foundation being the truth, including that which relates to the Deity and atonement of our Lord, as well as his teaching, and that of his Apostles; those communities which embrace and hold fast these divine doctrines, experimentally and savingly, must be built on the one foundation. Then, again, the headship of Christ, including, as it does, govern-

ment, by his own immediate power, as well as by his precepts and laws, it follows that those societies of Christians which hold him as their Head, and embrace these laws as the rule of obedience, and really render it, are members of his kingdom or church.

What, then, it may be inquired, has any kind of vocation to do with this? and what relation can offices in the church sustain in reference to these fundamental principles? Evidently no other than as the teaching of the doctrines in question, and the administration of the laws and discipline, lead to the recognition of the rights of Christ. The name by which any functionary is designated,—whether Bishop, Elder, or Deacon,—is of trifling importance; the rights of the office cannot go beyond an administrative power, without trenching on the supreme authority of the great Head of the church. What would be said of the pretensions of the Governor of a distant province of the empire, if he, and others his successors, should set up the claim of an exclusive dominion on the basis of their office? if they should assert, that they, in their character of Vicars-Regal, are essential to the possession of all property, honours, personal liberty, national franchises, and state-offices of every sort; and that, unless all these civil distinctions and privileges come through their hands, and with their sign-manual, they must be invalid, and cannot be legally enjoyed? and also that all the other provinces of the empire must be subject to the same rules, and through one or more of their successors, enthroned as the centre of all human rights, every blessing must flow? Is it not seen at once, that the true order of things would be reversed in this case? This personage is not an absolute Sovereign, and in that sense the fountain of power, but a Vicar, a Lieutenant. But it is obvious that the existence of civil society, of the commonwealth, of the rights and liberties of the people, is not made to rest on a delegated office, but on the laws. The function is given in relation to this previously-existing basis of society, but the society itself does not rest on the office. Would not the supreme power claim, in such cases, the right of something like sovereignty; and deal out its honours and rewards, not on the dictum and pretensions of its Lieutenant, but on the measure and rule of its own honour, justice, and grace? And, if the supposed officers should—by a course of audacious assumptions; by forced glosses and interpretations put upon the laws themselves; by setting up modes of administration tending to draw all power into their own hands; and by a mixture of hypocritical concern for the people's good, and of usurped dominion over their feelings and consciences—succeed in drawing away their loyalty and allegiance from their rightful Sovereign to themselves; would it not be expected that such arrogant and unfaithful servants would be superseded by others? and

that their office, the instrument of their disloyalty, would be shorn of some of its attributes, and one more simple, and in greater harmony with the rights of the Sovereign on the one hand, and of those of his subjects on the other, would be substituted in its place? Moreover, would not the people expect, *justly*, to enjoy the rights and liberties of citizens on the basis of the laws of their country, and not on subjection to an officer? Those laws they would consider as antecedent to every thing else; as lying at the very foundation of all their claims and blessings; and, in conformity to them, were possessed of a true and indefeisible right to the benefits of civil society. It is clear that the official claims supposed in this case would infringe on the prerogatives of the supreme power, virtually nullify the laws, and place the interests of the people in jeopardy. All that such parties have a right to claim,—or indeed do claim,—is that of administering the constitutional compacts betwixt the sovereign power and its subjects.

Now this case, in some sort, illustrates the one under consideration, though the analogy may not be perfect. We assume that the doctrines of Christ constitute the one only foundation of the church, and that He alone is its Head. It follows from this, that the church is founded on the "*truth;*" and that those who believe and obey it are on this foundation, and constitute portions of the church of the living God. We reiterate this sentiment. We say the plain, obvious, vital, well-understood doctrines of the Bible—the Bible alone—constitute the foundation of the Christian faith, and, consequently, that of the church: not the TRUTH and the POPE; not the TRUTH and the SUCCESSION; but the unmutilated TRUTH itself. This is, as we believe, the firm, immutable, and eternal foundation of the true church; that which will stand in all times, through all changes, and in the midst of every storm; and we assert that every soul really believing this truth is a Christian; that every society of such Christians is a local and isolated church; and that the union of all such societies constitutes the true catholic church, wherever found, or bearing whatever name they may.

On the ground of conformity to the holy Scriptures on this point, we claim to be a section or part of the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our fellowship is founded on the doctrine and teaching of Christ, the "*Foundation*" and "*Head*" of the church. We receive the holy Scriptures as divine, as sufficient, and as the only rule of faith and practice. From these holy Scriptures we have embodied in our acknowledged and legalized standards, the universally-recognised Articles of religion as held by all orthodox churches in every period of time. We believe in the blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in the incarnation of the Son in our flesh; his propitiatory and sacrificial death; his resurrection from the dead; his ascension to

heaven; his priestly office and mediatorial power and government; and that he will come to be our Judge. We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the fruit of our Lord's death; as the author of regeneration, holiness, and spiritual life and joy, to all believers. We believe in the remission of sins through faith in the sacrifice of Christ; to be shown in the happiness and holiness of an obedient piety. We believe in the force and authority of the moral law; the sacredness of the Sabbath; the obligations of the Christian profession; public worship, and diligent attention to all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord. We believe in the strict and proper divinity of the Christian church, with all that which of necessity belongs to it; namely, that it is not a voluntary association, but a union of men on the authority of the Christian faith. We believe in the two sacraments; that they are of divine appointment, and consequently binding on all Christians; and that their due administration, according to the teaching of Scripture, is essential to the being of a church.

In our case, these great principles, ramified in their just proportions through our whole system, are not loose and floating opinions, left to be adopted or not, as men may be inclined; or, if adopted, modified according to their own private views; and then, if held by one, and preached to the people for a time, entirely supplanted by the next incumbent, by a set of antagonist notions, just as the school in which he has been taught, or his own fancies or even heterodoxy, may dictate. Our doctrines are fastened to our church-system, by every variety of link and bolt, which prudent forethought could devise. It is possible for human unfaithfulness to accomplish any kind of injury and evil; but certainly, with our legal guards and wakeful care over the rising ministry, this is not likely to take place, we trust, for ages to come: we hope not at all.

And, in passing, we may remark, that we have much more confidence *in a succession of true doctrine*, than in any succession of orders. We cannot conceive that any body of men can constitute a scriptural church, in the absence of true doctrine, and that held in its own sense; and it is equally incredible, that a society of men holding such doctrine, in its own meaning, of faith and holiness, are not a scriptural church. We remark, on the necessity of the vital doctrines of the Gospel being maintained in their own saving and sanctifying power, because of the abuse of the opposite sentiment. One of the current opinions of the times, is, that if the Creeds of a church are orthodox, the church itself must be right, and there can be no justifiable reason for any separate movement. Hence the early labours of the Wesleys are blamed, on the ground that the Church remained evangelical in profession. But all contemporary testimony attests, that her standards were practically neglected, or denied; that the authorities and Ministers were strong and numerous enough to smother

the voice of their own church; and that they constantly preached and exhibited to the people a set of flimsy, legal—often Heathenish or Socinian—notions. Properly speaking, in many places, there existed no church at all, in the scriptural sense of the expression. A hierarchy of Priests, when both themselves and the people are destitute of all faith in Christ and marks of true religion, is no church, though the Creeds and Confessions remain. In many instances the first Methodist Ministers entered a village or town, in which the resident Priest and his people were equally and altogether destitute of even the decencies of morality,—much more of the faith and salvation of Christ:—will it be said that they constituted a church, just because the Creeds happened to repose in the parish? Their only fellowship was fellowship in sin; and it would require some ingenuity to prove that the slumbering Creeds and official Clergyman formed a church. It might as well be said that the Republic of Plato—the treatise bearing that name—constituted, of itself, a real, living community of happy citizens. Then, again, suppose the Oxford school should succeed in establishing the notion, that all the children of the nation, being baptized by themselves, will certainly pass into a state of salvation; and this opinion should possess the minds of these same people, to the neglect of those acts of penitence and faith in Christ which are taught by the Scriptures; it is evident that in one generation all true religion must become extinct. Then we ask, would these baptized infidels and profligates constitute a church, in their several localities? Just such churches as were found in the communion of Rome in the middle ages.

But it was held to be sinful and schismatical for the first Methodists to go amongst these classes of perishing sinners, and endeavour to form a religious society. This return to the primitive model; to the usages of the first Christians; to the scriptural idea of a real church-system, indicated by a true faith, holy life, and union with each other; did not harmonize with the prevalent sentiments, practice, and designs of the ruling ecclesiastical powers of the time, or with the public feeling; and hence the incorporation of the newly-created piety with the Establishment was sedulously guarded against and prevented. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how incorporation could take place; for "*what fellowship hath he that believeth with an infidel?*" But, though there could have been no fusion of the Methodist societies with the living masses of profligate unbelievers, yet these societies might have been placed on the foundation already existing in the provisions of the hierarchy; and on that basis the whole fruit of Methodistic labour might have rested at this day. This was refused. Not by Act of Parliament, as in the case of the Nonconformists; but by that which

is as effective,—a refusal to admit and make provision for the new life which had been created. By every possible mode, the Church refused to recognise these poor and despised believers in Christ; often preached against and persecuted them; drove them in many instances from the Lord's table; and seemed to act on the principle of making the Church too hot for them.

The issue is seen. Truth cannot be abandoned by those who have found it; faith in Christ cannot be modified and mutilated to meet the convenience of those who have attained this blessing; the life of God, and the enjoyments and blessings of His love, cannot be put off and put on, as expediency may dictate; the affections and sympathies of religion, which seek, as by a class of natural instincts, communion with others, cannot be obliterated in the believing heart; and, besides, Christian principles, duties, and conscientious obligations—all involved in this question—cannot be given up as things indifferent. The Church, as it existed in the beginning of Methodism,—and probably ever since,—imagined it ought not to encourage the piety of the new movement.

Meanwhile the Methodist leaders sought no change, no reform of the system, no purgation of the Liturgy, and no alteration of the governing power. All they desired was a practical provision for their spiritual good, in accordance with the doctrines and discipline of the existing Creeds. The Church refused to accede to this,—and the Methodist societies could not give up their fellowship. Their salvation was the question at issue. They had found the Lord, in his mercy, through these means; they had been blessed and edified in the divine life; their affections were kindled; all of truth, faith, enjoyment, hope, and holiness, which they knew, had been imparted through these channels; and it is difficult to convince men that the means by which they have been brought to God are either heretical, schismatical, or unlawful. Here, then, the matter stood for many years. The Church would not receive us on the avowed ground of our irregularities; whilst those things which were deemed irregular entered into the very vitals of the Christian life, and could not be safely given up.

By the easy and very natural operation of these causes, we have become, *ipso facto*, a church, whatever may be said on the *de jure* part of the question.

We imagine, that we carry out the primary idea of Scripture, on the subject of communion, founded on the Christian faith. The fellowship of the primitive disciples, as indicated in the annals of the Acts of the Apostles, evidently included much more than merely assembling together in one common place of worship; or meeting together, as now, once a month at the Lord's table, in great part strangers to each other. The communion of the ancient church evidently included an

interchange of experience and feeling; mutual instruction, advice, and exhortation; sympathy in trials, sufferings, and temptations; prayers for each other's welfare; confessions of "*faults one to another;*" and help and assistance in every thing relative either to this life or the life to come. What are we to understand by such expressions as the following, if this were not the case?—"*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.*" (James v. 16.) "*Exhort one another daily.*" (Heb. iii. 13.) "*Bear ye one another's burdens.*" (Gal. vi. 2.) "*If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.*" (Gal. vi. 1.) "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*" (Rom. xii. 15.) "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.*" (Eph. v. 19.) "*And all they that believed were together, and had all things common. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.*" (Acts ii. 44, 46.) We are evidently to understand, by this language, that the ancient communion of the church was not merely the recognition of a Pastor, and fellowship with him and their fellow-communicants at the Lord's table; but it was personal, the believers being "*knit together in love,*" and the "*body edified by that which every joint supplied.*" (Col. ii. 2; Eph. iv. 16.)

If this note of a true church be deemed essential, then we may lay claim to it. Our union is probably more complete than that of any community of Christians; and the true doctrine of the New Testament has, we believe, been embodied in our practice. Once in the week, or oftener, it is expected that every Methodist in the world will meet with others, his brethren in the Lord, for the purpose of enjoying the "*communion of saints.*" This is not formal. The joys and sorrows of the heart are laid open; the dealings and ways of God are made known; the progress of the Spirit's work in the soul is unfolded; the temptations and exercises of the life of faith are detailed; the divine affections are quickened and refined by the exercises of praise and worship; and the whole is sanctified by fervent and united prayer. Religion is one, all over the world, when it is divine:—the gift of the "*one God and Father of all;*" the effect of the one effectual sacrifice of the Son of God; the fruit of the one Spirit's operation; the grace obtained by the "*one faith:*" and it is identical in all its characteristics. Hence, as our people are called with the same calling, they speak the same language in every place. Were it possible to assemble the whole Methodist community, heart would meet heart in sympathy and love, would join in the same confession of faith, and blend their sacred joys in one harmonious song of praise. All this is deemed extremely objectionable; tending to make hypocrites, produce spiritual pride, and nurture enthu-

sidism. The question is, as to the practice being in conformity with the teaching and example of the primitive church. Being satisfied of this, we can endure the scoffs of the world, and the objections of doubting and lukewarm Christians. We hold the faith of Christ as revealed in the divine records; and we build the communion of saints on the experimental profession of this faith; and judge that, in this, we have the first and primary *note* of a true church of Christ.

2. A truly Christian service, including the sacraments, is necessary to the constitution of a church.

The church of Christ, as brought to view in the New Testament, evidently supposes a public religious service. This might not, and indeed could not, be perfectly uniform, in the mode, time, and place of observance. The first disciples of Christ had to conduct their worship under very different circumstances: sometimes in the synagogue, then in the oratory, and again, alternately, in the upper-room, the sea-shore, the house-top, the way-side, the wilderness, and the dark-vaulted cavern. But, at all hazards, the duty was observed. The assemblies of the church, in union with the mixed multitude who came for scriptural exposition, public worship, and the administration of ordinances, are often mentioned both in Scripture and in the earliest ecclesiastical historians.

The first inconveniences of the disciples of Christ gradually wore away. Their numbers, influence, and wealth, enabled them to provide places of public resort, in which to hold their assemblies, and to worship God. Confiscations, proscriptions, martyrdoms, could not destroy them; but the more they suffered, the more they increased: "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church."

Their services, at first, seem to have been very simple. They could not have possessed the entire and perfected canon of holy Scripture, for it was not then given. The whole of the New Testament was written during the plantation of the first societies; and every part, with the exception of the four Evangelists, addressed to particular local or provincial churches. Creeds and Liturgies, certainly employed extensively, perhaps generally, in early times, were of a much later date than most of, if not the last of, the Epistles. There exists good evidence that the different churches, such as Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and others, possessed formularies and Liturgies of their own; each independent of the other, but agreeing in all fundamental doctrines, and faithfully setting forth the privileges and duties of the Gospel. In the course of time these several symbols were moulded, as it seems, by some general authority, much into their present form, and became the guides of the united church.*

* See Bingham, Pearson on the Creed, Eusebius, &c.

This did not last long; for though the early Creeds were not formally discarded, yet they were practically superseded by accumulating error and superstition.

The *principle* we are dwelling upon, namely, the obligations of public worship as essential to the church-state, is indicated in many parts of Scripture. It is not merely of the Apostles and Ministers that our Lord says, "*Ye are my witnesses,*" but of the collective church. It was designed to set forth, exhibit, and testify of the truth and grace of God, in its public profession, worship, and ordinances. With this fully agree the several expressions, "*Ye are as a city set on a hill,*" "*Ye are the lights of the world,*" "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" The temples of religion are as beacons in the desert, to guide wandering men to God. The services of the Christian sanctuary are as collected rays of light thrown upon the dark and cheerless world, in its night of secular pursuits and sinful pleasures. The assemblies of the saints in their places of devotion, on the Lord's day, are a public witness, attestation, and fealty paid to the truth and obligations of the Gospel. That this is a branch of Christian duty, is obvious; and the men, or families, who neglect the house of prayer, and refuse to pay their devotions in the presence of the "*great congregation,*" have no claim to the Christian name. To meet God in his great temple; to sing hymns of praise in adoration of the perfections of his being, the wonders of his providence, and the riches of his grace; to celebrate the passion of our Lord, the merit and mercy of his atonement, and the freeness of his salvation to sinners; to invoke the blessings of the Trinity,—the love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the effusions of the Spirit,—together with the promised pardon of sin, and the comforts and joys of religion; are plain and obvious obligations, and are essential to the true church.

But this seems to indicate one or two points of importance, by which this branch of our own claim may be examined.

The first is, that a true church will not only exhibit in its order of services the abstract glories of God, but especially the mode of his manifold grace, as a guide to those who seek his blessing in public worship.

If worship be any thing more than a ceremony, filling the mind with abstract ideas, exciting the feelings, and by its forms and exercises intended to produce mere moral impressions; then it must be designed to lead to the attainment of specific blessings: and this, again, implies that God is present to manifest his grace in accordance with the supposed good to be attained, and also that, as all the privileges of the Gospel-covenant are administered conditionally, namely, on the rule of faith; so the performance of worship includes these acts of faith. But these acts of faith suppose objects of faith. The mind cannot rest on a non-entity; faith cannot grasp a fiction or a shadow;

and the guilty, fearful, and troubled mind cannot be satisfied with any thing but a tangible manifestation of the grace of God, in experimental power. Hence it follows, that the public service of religion should set forth, as clearly as possible, the way and manner of God's manifested mercy;—how he pardons the sinner, bestows comfort on the distressed, sanctifies the polluted, inspires peace and joy, admits men to his fellowship, and causes them to live in the plenitude of his love.

Whether our church-services answer these demands, is the subject to be considered. These services, in imitation of the primitive practice, consist of *hymns, prayers,* and *sermons.* The hymns we sing embrace, we are bold to affirm, one of the finest bodies of divinity extant; as well as poetic beauty and sentiment, almost inimitable. They enter into all the details of experience; the feelings of the heart are touched with the tenderest pathos; and the different stages of the life of God, from the first emotions of penitent desire, up to the highest raptures of sacred joy and pious and holy love, are described, and have an appropriate medium of expression. In some places the Liturgy of the Church is used, so that the prayers of the congregation, in these cases, are well-known. When it is not so employed, it may be truly affirmed that the extempore supplications of our Pastors embrace all sorts and conditions of men; the blessings they severally need are brought before God, and sought with a fervour and copiousness suited to the exigencies of the case. The gift of prayer is one of the most valuable and important which the Divine Spirit can impart to the true Minister; and though liturgical preparations are highly esteemed and partially adopted amongst us, yet it is certain that all who are truly called of God to the service of the sanctuary, will possess this in common with other qualifications. The other department, namely, sermons addressed to those who wait upon the Lord, are of a different nature from the other portions of public worship; but are an essential part; for, "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. x. 17.) "*The trumpet,*" in this respect, in our congregations, "*maketh no uncertain sound.*" Though diversified in other respects, in this our ministry is uniform in the full, clear, broad, and explicit enunciation of the way of the sinner's approach to God, the nature of saving grace, and the mode of its attainment. The proof of all this is in the effects wrought. God is found in these services by myriads, in the blessings of his covenant, in the comforts of his Holy Spirit, in the strength and energy of the new life, in the imparted power and triumphs of holiness, and in all the fulness of his divine love. Enthusiastic though it may sound, yet the truth is, that neither Ministers nor people amongst us can be satisfied, unless the divine presence is vouchsafed, and these effects are manifested. Formal devotion, the

decencies of morality, the "*form of godliness*," and the "*kingdom of God in word only*," without conversions and manifest spiritual life, are not deemed satisfactory.

It is held as a sacred principle by our church, that all true religion is divine, not remotely but immediately; that pardon and justification must, in every instance, flow from the act of God's grace. "*It is God that justifieth;*" (Rom. viii. 33;) and though the doctrine may be freely and plainly preached, yet the privilege is not attained by any thing answering to the notion of a reflex exercise of faith even in the truth or in the sacraments. Rather, faith is a condition, implying trust in the blood of Christ; and God himself is the judge of its sincerity, and of its recognition of the legitimate object; and must, by his own immediate and sovereign volition, pronounce the sinner pardoned, the captive released, the lost restored. The new birth is equally divine. It is called being "*born of the Spirit;*" (John iii. 5;) a "*new creation;*" (2 Cor. v. 17;) "*being quickened from the death of sin;*" (Eph. ii. 1;) and "*passing from death unto life.*" (1 John iii. 14.) Hence this is not brought about by moral suasion, by the influence of external means, by the force of some latent and innate power of the soul, called into vigorous developement by the arts of reason and persuasion: it is the power of God. The same is the case with respect to all the distinctive enjoyments of the divine life. They do not grow out of some common element of religion, created by the means of grace. If the Christian walks in peace, it is "*the peace of God;*" (Phil. iv. 7;) if he rejoices, it is "*in hope of the glory of God;*" (Rom. v. 2;) if he dwells in love, it is because it is "*shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost;*" (Rom. v. 5;) if he exhibits the strength and activity of holy life, it is because "*the inner man is renewed day by day.*" (2 Cor. iv. 16.)

On these grounds the services of a true and evangelical church, if such in reality, must be so framed and conducted as to lead to these results. The end is not answered unless this is the case. However formal, pompous, and imposing the worship of religious communities may be, if it do not lead to God, and, as a consequence, to these fruits and blessings, it is not Christian; and such communities are not faithfully exhibiting this characteristic of the true church. It is, we trust, our honest endeavour to guard against a mere setting forth of the abstract glories of God on the one hand, so as to lead to a mere general, rationalized, imaginative, mental exercise of the faculties of the soul, under the name of worship; and, on the other, to neutralize the great truths and blessings of religion, after the manner of Popery, so as to exhibit them by visible symbols, and suppose the very divinity and humanity of our Lord to be contained in a wafer. No; we endeavour to show that the Lord is present in the assemblies of his saints, in an ineffable manner, but really so, to confer, in rich expe-

rience, all the blessed privileges he has promised. To make known the manner of this, to point out the conditions, to lead the way, and thus to bring God down to man, and raise man to the enjoyment of God, is the great end of public worship. When this is secured, we have the beautiful sight of a Christian church in her highest altitude on earth; but when this is not the case, the decorated place—illuminated, perfumed with incense, and resplendent with attractions for the senses—is but a heathen temple.

But, more: The services of the house of God must set forth the peculiar work and offices of our Lord, as well as those of the Holy Spirit, in order to be Christian. The sacrificial and priestly character of our blessed Saviour is essentially involved in the duties of worship, and the manner of the sinner's approach to God, whether in private or in public. Our Lord opened this case in his own ministry, and the truth is completed in the Epistles. "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life,*" he said: "*no man cometh to the Father but by me.*" (John xiv. 6.) "*No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*" (Matt. xi. 27.) "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*" (John xiv. 13, 14.) In his direction on this subject, St. Paul introduces this: "*I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there i one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*" (1 Tim. ii. 1—6.) The Epistle to the Hebrews seems written expressly to illustrate this point. We quote one or two passages: "*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*" (Heb. iv. 14—16.) "*But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" (Heb. vii. 24, 25.) "*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*" (Heb. ix. 24.) "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the*

blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. x. 19—25.) It is very evident from all this, that worship without Christ must be unavailing, and that the only way of approach to the Father is through the Son. Prayer can only be answered, thanksgivings accepted, blessings conferred, and God of a truth be found amongst the assemblies of men, by the intervention of the Saviour's sacrifice, and the effective discharge of his priestly office.

From this it follows, that, in the instituted services of religion, this principle of the Christian economy ought to be regarded, and this want of man provided for. Indeed, in the dispensation itself, our Lord is a "*Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec;*" he "*ever liveth;*" hath "*obtained an everlasting priesthood;*" and made "*one sacrifice for sins.*" All this is perfect and immutable. The point is this: When an assembly of men meet together for worship, they ought to be led to apprehend this provision, to draw nigh to God through this High Priest of our profession, and so to pray and present their devotions by faith in "*the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne,*" as to obtain access to God, and to receive the blessings of his grace.

Hence the value and importance of the doctrine of Christ crucified. The Christian sanctuary ought to be filled with light on this subject. The hymns,—the prayers,—the sermons,—in order to meet the wants of men, and to strengthen their confidence in Christ, supposing them to be believers, and to instruct them if they are not, must be constantly full of this great theme.

Whether we have secured this point in our services, is the question under consideration: if so, then, in this particular, our worship is scriptural, and we may so far claim to be a branch of the Christian church. In this, as in other things, much depends on the living ministry. Theoretically, this is, undoubtedly, our principle. We no more expect the blessing of God in our public assemblies, the bestowment of the privileges of grace, or the conversion of sinners, if these services are destitute of a full, bold, clear, and vivid exhibition of the atonement and intercession of our Lord, than we expect to find Christian light, mercy, and grace in connexion with the mosque.

"*Where,*" said our Lord, "*two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" (Matt. xviii. 20.) The force and emphasis of this passage are in the term, "*my name.*" It is essential that Christian assemblies, great or small, should meet in the "*name*" of Christ. One thing invariably we find; namely, that if, by any circumstance, as from the imperfect apprehension of the case on the part of Ministers; a leaning to a legal or non-evangelical system; or, on the other hand, the temptation to sparkle in the false glare of a worldly elocution;—we say, if from any of these or other causes, the peculiar work of Christ is not kept steadily before the attention of our congregations, they invariably decline. Worship becomes insipid; "*briers and thorns spring up,*" in the place of good fruit; desolation takes the place of life, order, and beauty; and there is all possible evidence of a temple deserted by its Lord.

And besides, that which we acknowledge in ourselves, we witness in others. The history of churches illustrates this point, that, whenever and wherever the services have not retained their evangelical character, the spirit of piety has evaporated, and in a short period they have presented the aspect of perfect moral ruin. That our principle is true to this immutable arrangement of the divine economy, (namely, that, in the worship of God, Christ must be acknowledged in faith,) we are sure; that it is the desire and intention of the body I now address, that this should be perfect and complete, uniform and universal, we know; that this has been secured, to a very great extent, the fruits of our services delightfully declare; and the divergence from this is so very rare and unfrequent, that it scarcely breaks in upon the hallowed uniformity of our practice, and, when discovered, is found to originate in human infirmity,—perhaps truth ought to lead us to say, to a defective training, or, as in many instances in past times, to no training at all. Christ is "*the Alpha, the Omega, the first and the last,*" in our religious means. Praise without CHRIST, we hold to be poetic blasphemy in the temple of religion. Prayer without CHRIST is the presumptuous, arrogant, Pelagian pleading of a guilty criminal in the courts of the infinite Judge, on the plea of human merit; for what else can prayer contain, if not filled with the merit of the sacred sacrifice? Sermons without CHRIST—we will not say—are like a blazing meteor lit up to delude: that would be doing them too much honour: there is no light in them: they are rather like a black cloud passing over the fair bosom of the sky, and darkening the brightness of the sun. Worship without CHRIST is the intrusion of man into the presence of his Maker uninvited, unbidden, unprovided with any introduction, can be of no avail, is insulting to the majesty and holiness of God, and partakes of the nature of presumptuous sin. We earnestly pray that our services may become more perfectly

pervaded with the fulness of our Lord's sacrificial and mediatorial grace!

Then what shall we say of the sacraments? Are not these essential to the services of a church, calling itself Christian? It is objected, that we have not the sacraments, because we are not commissioned to give them. We have these sacred ordinances *in fact;* and the question of their validity must be left, where many other such questions are left, to be settled at some future time, and by other generations. In the mean while, it may be some comfort to us—*such as it is*—to know, that the most prominent parties raising this objection are in the same dilemma themselves. The Popish Priest will no more admit the validity of the sacraments administered by the Anglican Priest, than the latter will allow the validity of those which are delivered by the Methodist Minister.

What constitutes a valid sacrament? Not the hands which administer it, but its conformity to the original institution, to the ordination of Christ, and especially its containing and setting forth the very grace and blessing intended by our Lord. This is evidently the meaning of the Article of the Church of England: "And the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." If the Church is right as to the substance of the sacrament called the Lord's supper, then we are so; because, in general, we use the service of the Church in its administration; and our rule is to do so always. Then the only question at issue relates to the qualification for its administration. If we have a right to the ministry, we have a right to this particular function; and till it is proved that we are not Ministers, this question may lie over. In the mean time, we allow that the sacraments are requisite; and it is essential to the spiritual well-being of a Christian body, that they should be sacredly attended to. From various causes, and especially from the unsettled state of the question at the death of our Founder, the controversies which followed, and the slow and gradual manner of the introduction of the administration into our places of worship, this sacred ordinance, it may be granted, has not been, in time past, so perfectly attended to, as is observed in churches whose organization is more ancient. The defect has, however, been rapidly passing away in recent times; and regular provision has been made for the celebration of this holy ordinance, at least as frequently as is observed in other churches.

But are the proposed ends answered? Are the people edified in the spiritual life, strengthened in the faith, comforted in their tribulations, and united to each other in the bonds of fraternal love? We do not ask, if sin is infallibly and certainly forgiven, by the mere reception of the Lord's body and blood, as is taught by many. We

deny the dogma *in toto*, and consider it a most dangerous delusion; and, so far as it is received and acted upon by the people, fatal to true religion. But in the true sense of receiving grace and blessing, how shall we ascertain the fact? Just in the same way as we ascertain any other fact regarding the divine life,—by testimony and observation. The recipients of the Lord's supper amongst us may know whether or not they receive spiritual blessings, just as they may know this in their observance of other means. Observation can instruct us as to whether the people, thus "*setting forth the Lord's death until he come*," "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called*." We possess these modes of ascertaining the fact. Have they who object and doubt any other in their own case? As to the assumptions of the successionists, and the pretensions built upon them, they are no better than a mound of sand. The first link in this chain being a fallacy, all that is appended to it falls to the ground. Yet, if we appeal to experience and fact, in proof of the religious and gracious efficacy of our sacraments, this proof is denied us. If, on our own part, we demand evidence of the astounding efficacy of these other sacraments, we are answered: "We are the successors of the Apostles." Allowing this for a moment, what follows? "Why, the sacraments which we consecrate and give, infallibly administer pardon, grace, and holiness." Very well; is there no evidence of this? If so, where? Is it to be found in the testimony of your communicants, and in their lives? Nay, a mere child, in almost any village in England, can confute this. The swearing, drunken, quarrelling, cheating, profligate, and ignorant communicant of the Romish Church, as well as the immoral and irreligious recipients of the sacraments in the Church of England, have all received these holy mysteries at the hands of successionist-priests. How is it, then, that, in case this salvation is certainly ministered, neither the parties themselves nor any one else can discover it? that there is no internal evidence to the persons themselves, and no external evidence given to others by holy fruit? It is manifest, then, that the forms of a sacrament may exist without any *sacramental* effect following; proving that the virtue supposed is not absolutely and independently in the rite; but, like all the other parts of the Christian economy, the efficacy is dependent on the influence and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

We have every reason to be satisfied with this proof of the usefulness and validity of our own. The grace of God is enjoyed, the "*Lord's body and blood is discerned*" by faith, the spiritual life of the disciples is invigorated, divine joys are felt, the inward principles of holiness are strengthened, and the Holy Ghost seals and ratifies the blessings of the covenant. This is our second *note* of being a true church.

3. Spiritual life, in all its characteristics, is essential to a church.

The union and fellowship of men void of the life of God, and of the marks of a regenerate state, would not constitute a church. The Armenian, Abyssinian, Greek, Popish, and other ecclesiastical bodies, have remained under the designation of churches, when, in all probability, at some periods and in some places, not the smallest particle of spiritual life existed amongst them. It is difficult to conceive how these aggregations of men can be considered churches of Christ. Hierarchical arrangements do not of themselves constitute a church, but living men who are possessed of a true faith, and "*worship God in spirit and in truth.*"

(1.) By "life" is meant here, union with Christ in the blessings of his redemption.

The figures of Scripture beautifully illustrate this. The parable of the vine and its branches is in point: "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*" (John xv. 1—6.) The leading idea in this parable is that of derived life, supported and maintained by union with Christ. The church is represented under the figure of a tree: Christ is its root, trunk, sap; no fruit can be borne without union with him. Christians are branches in him, full of blossom, and in season bearing fruit. Some of these branches are "*purged,*" pruned; others are "*taken away*" as rotten and useless; while the greater number, leaving the tree perfect as a whole, live and yield fruit to the glory of God. We see from this, that life and fertility are the essential state of the church; death and decay the accidents: in other words, that the disciples of Christ are living and fruitful, but there may be connected with them those who bear no good fruit, and who in the end suffer excision. The figure of a human body, again, is of similar import: "*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.*" (1 Cor. xii. 12—14.) Many other passages, as we have seen, place Christ as the

head of this body. The doctrine of this portion of holy writ is the same as in the other case. The notion is that of a cumulative body of men, united to each other, and to Christ as the head. Is this body represented as an Egyptian mummy,—breathless, motionless, and dead? No. "*By one Spirit*" they have been "*baptized into one body.*" Hence the church is a body with a soul, and that soul is the Spirit of God, giving life, holiness, activity, and joy.

St. Peter represents the same thing by another figure,—that of a building: "*To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.....Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" (1 Peter ii. 4, 5, 9.) Here, again, we have the same truth. Christ is the "*living stone;*" believers in him are, in virtue of their union with him, "*lively stones;*" and the whole are a united temple employed in offering spiritual sacrifices to God.

This is the primitive church. How unlike many of those which claim to be the only true, catholic, and apostolic churches of modern times!

(2.) Again: By "*life*" is meant the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost.

As in the Apostle's description, "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.) The regenerating and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God is described as necessary to individual Christian piety, and, indeed, to the happiness as well as the formation of the spiritual character. None can be Christians without this. The human faculties are incapable, unaided, to discover the truth. This is made known by the Spirit. "*As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*" (1 Cor. ii. 9—12, 14, 15.) Assurance, peace, joy, love, temperance, meekness,

gentleness, goodness, faith,—are all equally spoken of as the *fruit* of the Spirit. In a word, all the characteristics of the regenerate state, all the happiness of the divine life, and the entire power of Christian holiness, in individuals, flow from this source; and our Lord said, in reference to the whole: "*The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.*" (John iv. 14.)

The same rule must obtain with respect to collective Christian societies. The Holy Spirit must dwell in and amongst its members. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, if the individuals are renewed and sanctified by his influence and power? The phenomenon of the church, in the first ages, living together in holiness and charity, or in case of a true and spiritual community in any age, can only be accounted for on this principle. To behold in primitive times a large number of persons, some of them Jews, and others Gentiles, brought together in a state of godly love;—or in modern times a large class of persons of different grades, education, and prejudices, all united together as one body;—must indicate the existence of some common influence and power. What can this be but the influence and power of the Spirit of God? And, more than this: if these people are found to enjoy the same privileges, to possess the same characteristic marks of mind and heart, essentially to speak the same language, and to live an equally holy life, then the same fact is further illustrated.

Now, that this is the case with all true Christians, is a matter of observation and notoriety. A similar life of holiness and piety is found to animate the whole; and it is certain, that common and general moral effects can only be produced by a common cause. When it is seen in nature that the same fertility is found on one soil as on another, it is clear enough, that the same agencies are at work. The Spirit of God is just as essential to the fruitfulness and happiness of the church as the principle of life—whatever it may be—in the material universe.

But in any branch of the true church, retaining its union with Christ, life in her assemblies, as well as in her members, will be apparent. This is seen in the power attending the Gospel; in the unction accompanying the ordinances; in the conversion of sinners; and in revivals of the work of God. Dull uniformity is never found to exist in a church which retains the truth, the simplicity of worship, the living faith of the Gospel, and the spirit of fervent prayer. The Holy Spirit will dwell there as in a celestial home, to produce the "*beauties of holiness,*" and the graces of piety in all their freshness. The ornaments and glory of religion, and of private and public virtue, will be visible in the life and habits of such a people. But the mighty energy will not stop there. Effusions of the Spirit will be manifested as in ancient times. St. Luke

speaks in the Acts of the Apostles of the place in which the disciples were met being shaken by this power. Whether the places of assembly are now so affected or not, if this divine agency be present, the people will be awakened from the sleep and death of sin; roused from the dream of earthly ease and happiness; brought to penitent mourning; will cry out, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" and in fervent supplication seek God. This power, likewise, if present at all, will be "*present to heal.*" Penitents will be brought into a state of pardon, dark and afflicted spirits will attain "*peace with God,*" and the profligate and sensual will become "*new creatures.*"

This is the life which was enjoyed in the first assemblies of the church; this has ever been manifested in subsequent times, when in any place she has remained true to her high calling; and it must be the case every where, if the Spirit of God continues his divine and saving operations. The rigidity, coldness, and barrenness of winter, as contrasted with the genial warmth and fruitfulness of summer, are not more apparent than is the death of churches without the Holy Spirit, and the life of others under his inspiring influence.

(3.) Again: By "life" is meant the possession and vigorous exercise of spiritual faculties and graces.

The church being a spiritual community, and devoted to heavenly objects, must, in order to this, possess a new and divine class of faculties and affections, either to enjoy its blessings, or to perform its duties. The one term "holiness" may indicate what is meant. There must be a perception of the supreme beauty and excellences of the holiness exhibited in the Scriptures, as the highest good; and, at least, a deep love of sacred things,—of prayer, the truth, the sanctuary of religion,—and a longing desire after conformity to God's image; or this form of life cannot exist. The opposite feelings of human nature, such as "*emulations, wrath, strife,*" the ambition, pride, and covetousness of the world, have in all instances, when indulged in, wrought the utter ruin of Christian societies.

One thing is much and constantly insisted on, as characteristic of the life of which we speak,—*the union of love.* How beautiful is our Lord's intercessory prayer, offered while on earth, for his church through all time!—"*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*" (John xvii. 20—23.) On the same subject he says: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one*

another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 34, 35.) We give one passage from St. Paul: "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*" (Col. iii. 12—14.) The beloved disciple is full of this theme: "*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that we heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*" (1 John iii. 10, 11; iv. 7, 8, 12.)

This union of love is, as we perceive, represented as originating in one cause,—the love of God in Christ to his people; having one mode of manifestation,—the pardon of sin, the new-birth, the spiritual life; —this, again, creating one common and universal class of affections in the heart, and these directed to one central object,—the Supreme Fountain of all good. Attracted to God in his paternal character and condescending grace,—as well as internally moved by a common impulse of love to seek all happiness in him,—the mind soars above the animal passions and sordid feelings, which engender strife and hatred. But, more: a Christian people discover in each other the evidences of grace. This they recognise as the fruit of their Lord's death, and of the Spirit's influence. Those whom they thus perceive as being beloved of God, and men for whom their Saviour died, must be objects of mutual affection, because of their relationship to the one Lord of all. And, moreover, as the greater includes the less, so the existence of this one divine affection must lead up all the inferior feelings and graces of the soul to the full and appropriate discharge of their several functions. Tenderness, sympathy, mercy, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, courtesy, and charitable relief administered to the necessity of the saints,—must all follow in the train of love.

From the prominency given to this subject in the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles, we may be certain that love is of the very essence of the church-state, and is a most important and valuable element of its prosperity. Unity in particular societies of Christians, as well as an approximation of catholic charity amongst those of some diversity of opinion on minor questions, must be sought in love.

Other things have been tried in vain. Authority, coercion, the wranglings of reason, the power of persuasion, common symbols of faith, and attempted uniformity of every sort, have all failed to produce this effect. It is certain that unless *unity* and *diversity* can be made to co-exist, the former will never be an inhabitant of our earth, or form the state of the church. Is there any reason in the world why they who acknowledge the same God and Father of all, and especially who believe in the same Lord Jesus Christ, and have received the same Holy Ghost, his promised gift, should not dwell in unity and godly love? It is time the divinely-appointed element of divine love should be tried amongst churches which are separated from each other. Distinct, local, Christian societies, cannot be considered as within the pale of the church at all, unless the bond of union be love; and if they possess the heart of love amongst themselves, why not extend it to other Christians?

There is also great strength in this divine affection. Any separate church must be internally strong and vigorous, when the spirit of love pervades its fellowship, stimulates its zeal, lives in its services and exertions, and binds its rich and poor in one harmonious concord of affectionate co-operation. And we may be certain that the most successful instrumentality that any community of Christians can employ to impress the world, is that of love. It is of the nature of a genial solar influence. It softens the hard and rugged; it melts the asperities and prejudices of the obstinate; it soothes and consoles the downcast; it wins the confidence of the suspicious, and prevents evil surmising; and when argument, dogmatism, and authority fail either to convince or to persuade, love very often finds an avenue to the heart and conscience, by which truth may afterwards enter, and faith and hope spring up. As that believer is the best Christian, and the nearest in moral resemblance to God, who possesses most love,—"*for God is love;*" (1 John iv. 8;) so that community of Christians, which amongst themselves, as well as towards all other bodies holding the Head, and even towards the world without, exhibits most of the spirit, holiness, beauty, unity, and activity of love, is the best, and the most Christian and catholic church.

We indulge the hope, that, from the beginning to the present period, our church has exhibited signs of life. This, in part at least, has been our offence. Our people have been too fervent and active for the taste of the world around them; and have often been considered, even by portions of the church, as manifesting an enthusiastic spirit. That a mighty mass of men has been impregnated with the leaven of our doctrines, principles, and opinions, in fine, with the *animus* of Methodism, at home and abroad, —must be granted on all hands. But the true question is, whether this is spiritual life. Is it true religion? If so, then it

follows, that we have been moulded and fashioned by the operation of a divine and saving power, the energy and influence of the Spirit of God.

Are our people united to Christ? They acknowledge him as "*God with us,*" as the true and only Saviour, as alone making atonement for sin, as "*the High Priest of our profession,*" as the "*Lord our righteousness,*" and as the only FOUNDATION and HEAD of the true church. His precious death is the only ground of their confidence for justification, sanctification, and eternal life; and they disclaim every other, whether presented to them in the form of human virtue, works, or sacraments. They know and acknowledge no other merit, redemption, or salvation, but what is found in him. This is the common, the universal faith of the whole community; it is the teaching of the ministry, and the creed of the body.

This, it will be granted, is so far well; but is the union vital? It is so far vital, that the great body of the people claim to enjoy the blessings which are described as resulting from the sacrificial and priestly offices of our Lord.

Moreover, they are not isolated, distinct, separate, wandering pilgrims, living as recluse religionists, without any tangible form; but an "UNITED SOCIETY;" and stand out to view in a *corporate* capacity. The evidence of their having received the Gospel is indubitable. Can they be any thing but a church? If they are something else, what are they? Can a true believer in Christ—who, in virtue of his faith, has obtained the salvation for which He died and which He offers in His blessed word—be any thing but a Christian? And, we ask, can tens of thousands of such believers, united together in the closest bonds of fraternal love, making profession of this faith, be any thing but a church? The church is the "*body of Christ.*" True; and where are we to look for this body, but amongst those who have a lively faith in its HEAD? The church is the "*family of God.*" True; and where are we to expect to find this family, but amongst adopted and regenerate men? These are the proofs of our union with Christ, the glorious HEAD of his spiritual body,—the evidences on which we claim to be a church.

Have our people received the promised gift of the Holy Ghost? They acknowledge His offices, His divinity, personality, and various functions as exhibited in the Christian economy, to be a part of their faith. They believe that he is permanently connected with Christ, in the dispensation,—finally established by his exaltation to the right hand of God,—the object of which is the great work of the world's salvation; and that no man can be a true Christian but by his gracious power; and, more, that no corporation of men, however venerable, or however economically perfect, can be a church without his constant presence and blessing.

But, besides this, they profess to enjoy this great "*gift.*" This with them is no confused and unintelligible notion, without evidence and fruit. The Scriptures teach, that "*he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.*" (1 John v. 10.) And again: "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" (Gal. iv. 6.) Myriads testify that in this mode they enjoy this blessing. St. Paul himself has said: "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" In accordance with this, Christians are exhorted by the same Apostle to "*stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*" (Gal. v. 1.) The great body of our people profess to enjoy this liberty. Again: our Saviour taught, "*Ye must be born again:*" and, "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" (John iii. 7, 8.) The greater number of these people profess to have been so born again. The Apostle says, "*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost;* (Rom. v. 5;) and, "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.*" (Gal. v. 22.) Vast multitudes tell us they possess these divine, these happy feelings. All this, it may be said, relates to individuals; whereas the promise of the Spirit is made to the church. What is the church but an aggregation of individuals? And yet we have no objection to meet this plea. Be it granted that the Holy Ghost is promised to the collective church, in her Ministers, ordinances, and members. It will follow from this, that the Gospel preached by the former will be "*in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*" (1 Thess. i. 5.) How is this to be ascertained but by effects following? These effects are before the world. Almighty power has attended this ministry in the conversion of great multitudes, some in heaven, and some on earth, which have been brought under its influence. In the second case,—that of ordinances,—the effusions of the Spirit must attend their administration. If testimony, happiness, holiness, and spiritual growth and strength, are to be taken as evidence of this blessing, we possess this. In the third instance noticed,—a blessing on their fellowship,—we may say that the vitality, peace, and holiness sought and enjoyed by a numerous people for a century, is satisfactory demonstration of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Then, again, we ask, Can a community be visited by the Holy Ghost, and can this blessed influence attend their ministry, their services, and their sacraments, and cement, unite, and sanctify their people, and yet such community not be a church? If not, this state of things must be considered as perplexing and wonderful,—a moral phenomenon, as if the fruits of harvest were found in an arctic winter.

Are our people in possession of those spiritual affections which predispose and fit them for "the communion of saints?" It is clear that

the first societies of Christians were not founded on the basis either of the principles of civil and political science, or of the common opinions and passions of human nature. Christianity introduced into the world a purely spiritual system, and proposed to build the church, as to the foundation, on the truth, and, as to instruments and means, to employ the new and divine affections which it created by its influence on the mind and character of its disciples. Churches without faith, conversion, Christian love, and humility,—founded on creeds and symbols alone,—have retained their name for centuries, but have manifested none of the characteristics of true Christianity.

Certain spiritual and moral qualities are always supposed in the scriptural accounts of the church. Let us take one picture of this state. "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" (Eph. iv. 13—16.) The terms employed in this beautiful description are only applicable to the truly spiritual mind and character. The elements of this are presumed to exist in the body, and so to operate as to lead to that unity, edification, knowledge, love, and enlargement, which are essential to the true life of religion.

Now, do we possess any thing like this? Are religious affections, principles, and feelings, the bonds of our fellowship, the cement of our union, the spring and fountain of our life? We know no other influence which is adequate to the purpose, and believe that the great mass of our people are a true part of the body of Christ, attracted to each other by the power of a common feeling, namely, that of similarity of faith in the Saviour, and possess an identity of spiritual nature, affections, and objects of pursuit. This has ever been the soul of our fellowship. All, indeed, do not remain. The ambitious, who have been discontented with their own position, have again and again agitated and divided the people, formed factions, and for a time scattered portions of the flock. What has been the issue? Has the wound remained,—the gash continued? No: in a most astonishing manner, and in an inconceivably short period, the wound has been healed; and health, vigour, and growth have gone on almost without interruption. This shows, that, even in the most afflictive cases of division in our history, the vitality has remained, life has flowed on, the body has retained its unity and strength, and the

rent made has only been the severance of an excrescence which could not be absorbed. As to individual instances of separation, from the loss of faith and piety, the indulgence of worldly affections, and the existence of some unsubdued sin, it is well known that they generally take place without any disciplinary course at all. The internal life, spirit, and power, throw off these dead or dying branches; just as the leaves which hang on some trees through the winter, are at once expelled from their unnatural position on the return of spring.

We are warranted in inferring that nothing less than the existence of the sentiments, affections, and graces, which unitedly constitute the Christian character, have, on the main, ever been the bond of the Christian fellowship amongst us. Salvation in Christ, and the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, together with corresponding religious exercises and services, have prepared our people, in all times and places, to form really "UNITED SOCIETIES," to cherish one spirit, to speak one language, to adopt one system of discipline and worship, to own and esteem each other in all places as brethren, and by combined exertions to promote the salvation and happiness of all men. If this union and life, these various affections, religious services, and one united fellowship, in the faith of Christ, and in the fear and love of God, do not indicate the church, we again ask, What do they indicate? When we behold the human body, do we not at once infer that this physical organization must be inhabited, inspired, employ its senses, move, and perform all its functions through the mysterious presence and powers of the soul? In like manner, when we see a large community exhibiting all the characteristics of the body of Christ, are we not driven to infer that it is his church, and that beneath the external formation there is hidden a divine power,—the Spirit of God,—and that the life, holiness, unity, and beauties of associated religion, could not exist without His inspirations? This LIFE, including a vital faith in Christ, the blessings of the Holy Ghost, and the identity of our fellowship with the scriptural characteristics of the body of Christ, in the functions and affections existing,—is the *third note* of our being a church.

4. Holy discipline, on the rules of the word of God, is essential to a church.

The recognition and pervading authority of the laws of Christ are evidently necessary. How can any church be of the kingdom of Christ, unless he reigns as King, by the predominance of his laws? And how can these laws have power, if they are not recognised on the part of the people, and enforced by holy discipline? This question is one of the most difficult and perplexing, in the abstract, that can well be imagined; and the practical application and enforcement of discipline has originated most of the

discontent and divisions on the one hand, which have arisen among Christian bodies, and most of the oppression and cruelty inflicted upon them on the other. All the absurd, anti-scriptural, restrictive, and persecuting exactions of the canon-law, dominant in Christendom for so many long and dreary ages, fall under the general head of discipline. Extremes on one side follow extremes on the other. Hence, amongst many of the Protestant churches discipline has often been lax; the teaching and precepts of the Gospel of Christ, on the express subject of the government of the church, and the obligations of its members, have been allowed to fall into neglect; the consequence has been, the discredit of religion itself, and the degradation of the kingdom of Christ amongst men.

On this somewhat difficult question we may say that our general principle is, to retain the supremacy of the word of God, in the fulness and sufficiency of its teaching, for discipline as well as doctrine, and in all things pertaining to the Christian life, and the government and well-being of the people; that the enforcement of these laws, according to the New Testament, can only be legitimately secured by moral means, —such as teaching, admonition, suspension, and, in case of necessity, excision from the body of believers. For the sake of precision, and to render the rules of the kingdom of Christ clear and intelligible to the members; also to enable them fully to understand the nature and obligations under which they place themselves by uniting with a Christian church, and to lead them to feel the necessity of walking circumspectly; it is necessary for the authorities to draw out the sense and meaning of Scripture into succinct propositions or canons: but it is not lawful to pervert the meaning of the word of God, and thus change his church into an earthly republic; or by the use of the selected code to supersede the laws of Christ, and by this infringe the right of private judgment in a free use of the Scriptures. The Bible must still be left in the hands of the people, and to its divine authority the final appeal ought, in all cases, to be made.

It is quite impossible, in this discourse, to go through the entire body of our rules on matters of discipline; all that can be attempted must be limited to a few of the OBJECTS proposed.

(1.) As our system rests on the fact, that religion itself is experimental and practical; and that the church is composed of those who, at least, are "*pricked in the heart*" by the word of truth, so as to desire to "*flee from the wrath to come;*" the first branch of our discipline relates to this subject.

Rules to guide the people in all the essential duties and obligations of the spiritual life,—private, domestic, and conventional,—as well as in the church-state, are provided. These are free from all ambiguity; are simple and practical, and only aim at the promotion of

holiness of heart and life. In establishing this branch of our discipline, our Founder gloried in the circumstance that the foundation of our communion is of the most catholic nature. No subscription to any doctrinal Articles, modes of church government and order, rubrics, canons, and creeds, is demanded; but a simple desire to "*flee from the wrath to come,*" evidenced by "*repentance, and fruits meet for repentance.*" This principle is beautifully developed in the whole scheme of discipline relative to the members of the church. Every provision is found to have some design to promote their experimental growth in the knowledge and enjoyment of the things of God. And it seems to be assumed that he who is penitent, who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, who duly attends the means of grace, and who regards all the obligations of practical religion, cannot be very wrong in his creed. That the head is more frequently put right by the heart, than the heart made right by the head, may be very well allowed. And hence it was believed, that if the soul were affected by a sense of sin, this would, if followed out, lead to faith in the Gospel.

The entire discipline of the body on the subject of membership—including admission, continuance, suspension, expulsion—is founded on the simple and only principle of forming and preserving a spiritual church on the faith of the Gospel, experimentally and practically held. Those regulations and usages which are deemed most objectionable by other Christians,—as the private meetings for conference on matters of personal religion,—are all designed to carry into effect one of the leading ideas of Scripture; namely, that of mutual edification in faith and piety, so as to bring out into public view and practical operation the hidden power and grace of the heart. While our discipline treats with the utmost tenderness and assiduous attention those who are "*weak in the faith,*" and uses all possible means for their encouragement and improvement, it discountenances indifference, and visits the proofs of hypocrisy and immorality with certain admonition, or excision, as the case may require.

(2.) Our sacramental services are equally guarded.

It is required that these ordinances shall be attended to, and administered, in the most solemn and impressive manner. The members of the church are accredited by that circumstance; but, to meet the case of other persons who are not in society, on application to the Minister, and approval by him, they too are admitted. By these rules the Lord's table, on the one hand, is sufficiently guarded, and, on the other, the truly catholic principle is recognised,—that there is *a general* church of Christ, as well as particular communions; and the Methodist economy would not refuse its members the advantage of communicating with any portion of that

church, or of receiving to its table those who consider it meet, or find it convenient, to avail themselves of this privilege amongst us.

(3.) But it is designed by our discipline to conserve not merely the purity of the church in its living members, but also the doctrines of the Gospel, as preached in our congregations.

This remark embraces two points of equal importance,—the evangelical truth of the doctrines taught, and the purity of the pulpit—the vehicle of their enunciation.

The rules on the first point are extremely stringent. They are, as is well known, not limited to a voluntary judgment, but are secured by legal provisions connected with the settlement of every regular place of worship that we occupy. It is not in the choice of any parties to determine what doctrines shall be permanently preached; no other than those which were taught by our Founder, and made the standard for the body by his authority, can be promulgated. Power is also given to so many parties to watch over this legal arrangement, with the right to adjudicate in cases of any existing corruption of doctrine, in the church first, and, if that be found an insufficient remedy, to carry the question to the highest legal tribunals of the land. Hence, the possible continued existence of heretical doctrine must be supposed on the ground of entire indifference, founded on the departure from the faith of the whole body. The value of this will be apparent by contrast. We are supplied with an ample illustration in what is now going on. Let us take No. 85 of the "Tracts for the Times." It is given in the form of Lectures, delivered in St. Mary's church, Oxford. A more mischievous production never issued from the head or pen of man. It is difficult to say which predominates most, infidelity or Popery; but one thing is certain, that not one iota of evangelical truth, or of the doctrines of the Church of England, understood as a Protestant Church, appears from one end to the other. Yet this tissue of Popish infidelity was preached in one of the established churches of the nation, and no disciplinary remedy has been enforced. Would a case parallel to this be permitted amongst ourselves? Most certainly not. Any of our places of worship, allowing the promulgation—we will not say, *of doctrines as heretical and pestiferous*, for that is next to impossible, but—of deviations from the truth in any of the vital subjects of the Gospel, would be forfeited. The security that true theology shall be universally and for ever taught, is as ample as the wisest provisions can possibly make it. When we see the amazing difficulty of providing for the SUCCESSION of evangelical doctrine in particular churches, the value of this feature of our discipline will be duly appreciated.

The other subject referred to,—namely, the arrangements, or, to

use the more ecclesiastical term, the canons, provided to conserve the purity of the ministry itself,—is closely connected with the foregoing topic. It is enough to say, that this is continuous. It is not deemed sufficient that the candidate for this office shall give unequivocal proof, as far as man's judgment can go, of conversion to God, and that he is "*moved by the Holy Ghost*" to take the sacred office upon him; but it is also considered necessary that he should give evidence of a similar piety and moral fitness for this holy function in all subsequent periods of life. The holy doctrines of the Gospel have but a poor chance of being dealt with fairly in unholy hands, considered simply as truths. Indeed, it may be safely affirmed, that the thing never existed. The verities of God must take their form and colouring from the mind through which they pass. Hence, in corrupt churches confidence is never exercised for any good effects from preaching; it is usually decried as of little value; but the sacraments are depended upon: these, it is held, lose none of their saving efficacy by being defiled by the hands through which they pass. "*Unto the wicked God saith,*" in every age, "*What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?*" "Once a Bishop, always a Bishop," may do as an ecclesiastical maxim; but, if many of those who have sustained this and other branches of the sacred office, had been dealt with on Christian rules, they would have been placed in a very different position. We do not plead an exemption from human infirmity; but we do say, that our discipline, on these two vital questions,—security from heretical pravity, and official ungodliness,—provides as many guards as can be well devised.

(4.) The ultimate end proposed by our discipline is expansion and growth.

The connexional principle, expressed by the term, "UNITED SOCIETIES," developes this. This appears in every variety of mode. It is seen on the platform of our ministerial operations in the several *Circuits* at home. Though most of these include one or more well-instructed and respectable congregations, as the centre or basis of operations; yet they embrace numerous villages, hamlets, suburban and scattered portions of the population, having neither the means nor the inclination to provide for themselves. Formerly this work was left very much in our hands. No parties "*cared for these souls,*" perishing "*for lack of knowledge.*" Our operations in this form have been deemed irregular. This is a pure mistake. When in former times, the Ministers, and their associates and helpers, were seen perambulating the country in quest of lost souls; pushing their advanced posts into the territories of ignorance and sin; making little and despised lodgments in the dismal abodes of wicked men;

establishing the means of grace as they were able, and then watching over and guarding the whole;—these proceedings were deemed eccentric and disorderly. The very reverse. They proceeded on a great principle, wrought into a perfectly harmonious plan of labour. These despised Evangelists were not at home in their excursions. They were in possession of a central point, held in peace and power; and these visitations were made to enlarge the circumference of their Christian borders, and to bring to God, and the blessings of his grace and truth, those who were wandering in the desert. How many of these moral wildernesses have been made to smile and "*blossom as the rose!*" The duty of the church to endeavour to seek enlargement in the sense of bringing others to the knowledge of salvation, is felt to be so vital, that it may well be considered as forming a part of our disciplinary code. The strong are taught that it is their duty to support the weak—the rich to supply the lack of means amongst the poor—the saved to care for the souls of the "*ignorant and those who are out of the way*"—and the consolidated societies to feel the obligation of providing the means of religion for the world of perishing men. The effect of this principle, embodied in our Rules, and thus acted upon by all the members of the church, is seen in the *expansion* of the system, the enlargement of the work, and the salvation of men, on the scale of our existing power and numbers. This discipline, as in actual operation amongst us, is the *fourth note* of the church.

5. A spiritual ministry, sustaining the double function of preaching and the pastoral care, is necessary to constitute a church.

A distinction has sometimes been made betwixt the church and the ministry. The congregation of the faithful has been spoken of under the general appellation of *the church*, whilst the ministry has been represented as a mere office, not essential, not inherent, not an integral part of the body of Christ. And, on the other hand, many reasoners, and especially those holding popish, or semi-popish opinions, speak of the hierarchy, the order, the canonical platform, the synodical assemblies of Ministers, and the apparatus of means, as the church; whilst the people are altogether lost sight of. Both these notions are evidently unsupported by Scripture and the reasons of the case. Ministers and people stand in necessary connexion with each other, though their position in the house of our Lord may be different. A conclave of Ministers would not, in that character, constitute a church; and an assembly of believers, destitute of a Pastor,—except in cases of accident, emergency, and necessity,—would, it is true, be a meeting or assembly of religious men; but, without the word of God preached, and the sacraments administered, could not, in the proper sense of the expression, be considered a church. It is clear from the testimony and

precedents of the New Testament, that the union of both in their just and proper position—the one as the Pastor, the other as the flock—is essential to constitute the state in question.

The ministry, as a function, was appointed by Christ in his humiliation, as a permanent provision of his kingdom. "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 18—20.) We have here not only the institution of the ministry, but its continuance, provided for. How could Christ be with his Apostles to the end of the world, unless an order of men were to be raised up in perpetuity, to be favoured with this privilege? We do not dispute with any parties respecting the intention of Christ in raising up a succession of Ministers. The questions in debate relate to other points; as, whether they are called immediately by Christ himself, in the exercise of the power of which he speaks; or whether the Bishops are a distinct order, and lineally the successors of the Apostles, and as such possess the exclusive right and prerogative to appoint, in perpetuity, those who are to hold this and all other ministerial offices; or whether, no mention being made of such a design in the law itself, compared with other passages, Bishops and Elders are not of the same generic ministerial order, and possessed of equal rights; or whether, in the proper sense of the term as technically used, a series of appointments, one succeeding another, as the links of a chain, in one specific line without deviation, is meant: on the other hand, whether our Saviour, having said nothing on the question, has not left himself at liberty to break through any imagined line, and when one set of Ministers fail to accomplish his work, he may not raise up others; and if they are so called, anointed by his Spirit, and endowed for the office, they may not justly be considered as the true followers or successors of the first Apostles and Evangelists.*

Our own ministerial vocation, so far as the external call is considered, is soon and easily stated. The facts are clear and succinct.

(1.) The venerable Founder of our body was a Presbyter of the Church of England. When he came carefully, and without prejudice, to examine the question, he found that the order of Bishops and Presbyters, as exhibited in the New Testament, was the same; that, moreover, this principle was recognised in the Church for a considerable time; and that the superiority of Bishops arose out of the mere

* See BURNET'S "History of the Reformation" (Records); JEWEL'S "Apology" and "Defence;" FABER'S "Vallenses" and "Provincial Letters;" STILLINGFLEET'S *Irenicum*; POWELL'S "Essay on the Apostolical Succession."

circumstance of their being, for the sake of order, elevated to preside in the meetings of the Elders; and when the churches had several Ministers, from convenience and necessity, one of the number, from age or superior endowments, was appointed to take the superintendence,—that is, he was the first amongst equals. When Mr. Wesley was virtually put out of the Church,—that is, not permitted to execute what he considered his mission regularly within her pale,—he threw himself on this first, primary, and scriptural view of his position. Hence he considered himself not merely a Minister of the national Church of England, but *a Presbyter of the universal church;* so that though he might not be permitted to exercise his calling in one particular sphere, yet the "*dispensation of the Gospel which he had received*" held good in any sphere and in any place; in point of fact, that he did not cease to be a true Presbyter of the church of Christ, when he was dispensing the Gospel in the fields and private buildings; and believing truly, that the *Episcopoi* and Elders of the New Testament were of the same *degree*, he says, on one occasion, that he "*believed he was as really a Bishop as any in the land.*"

(2.) God honoured this remarkable man by making him the instrument of the conversion and salvation of great numbers. From amongst these his spiritual children, many came forward, from time to time, attesting that they were called of God to preach his Gospel. This our Founder violently opposed at first; but the evidence of their piety, gifts, and the remarkable blessing which evidently rested on their labours, bore down his opposition, and he yielded to the demonstration, that this too was the work of God.

(3.) These holy and zealous men, after due examination, were set apart for the work to which they were called, though not by imposition of hands. This setting apart in the congregation, by prayer, exhortation, and religious exercises, was of the *essence* of ordination, though destitute of the formality of the "*laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.*" This latter ceremony was evidently avoided, that as small an amount of offence as possible might be given to the Church, that her order might as slightly as possible be innovated; and that a link of connexion might be retained: for it must be conceded, that Mr. Wesley treated these Helpers as Preachers only, not possessing the full ministerial call, and desired his societies to receive the sacraments at the hands of the Clergy.

(4.) These PREACHERS proved themselves to be men of eminent qualifications for the ministry. They performed their office with great power, and wonderful effect. They were the instruments of awakening multitudes of sinners, of extending the old societies and founding new ones, and ranked amongst the most able Evangelists ever known in the church. But besides preaching, they also performed the function of Pastors. They watched over their flocks, fed them by

wholesome doctrine, instruction, and discipline. They admitted into the societies, governed, and expelled. In fact, they performed all the offices of true Ministers, save the administration of the sacraments. This point Mr. Wesley reserved, evidently under the persuasion that without ordination by the imposition of hands, the Preachers were not fully qualified; and he withheld this, that, as before stated, the members might be induced to attend at the parish church. We are only giving a narrative, and stating facts; or we might ask, "What right had these Preachers to do so much without being permitted to do the rest? to form, feed, govern, and watch over churches of Christ, and thus in every possible way to lead them into the truth, privileges, and blessings of the Gospel?" We ask, "What right had they to go thus far, if they had not the right to do the only other thing necessary to the ministerial office,—to administer the sacraments?"

It must be remarked here, that Mr. Wesley believed he possessed the right to give this power, as much so as any Bishop in England. Hence, when from prudential motives he saw it suitable to exercise it, he did so without scruple. When America set herself free from her connexion with the mother country, he ordained men for the ministry, and gave form to a church-system. Scotland, also, being, as he thought, differently circumstanced from England, he adopted a similar mode of proceeding for that branch of the work; and, in the latter period of his life, he ordained some few of the Preachers for the full ministry in this country; so that, in truth, the pastorate amongst us has never been destitute of an ordained Presbytery, to transmit the very orders possessed by Mr. Wesley himself. If it be contended, that a succession, in the sense of a transmission of orders, is necessary to constitute a valid ministry; we reply, that we have never been without this power, because we have always had in the ministry men who had themselves been ordained by Mr. Wesley, and who had in their turn ordained others.

Here, then, is the power of a perfect church, and ecclesiastical system, so far as the ministry is concerned, even on the principles contended for by most of the parties holding the essential connexion betwixt an ordained ministry and a valid church. And on the ground of the identity of Bishops and Elders as one order, fully believed by Mr. Wesley, and by all candid and truth-seeking writers on the question; it follows, that the constitution of the American Methodist Episcopal Church is only a legitimate developement of the principle; and, it may be added, that an imitation of that great transaction in this country would be perfectly justifiable on the ground assumed by Mr. Wesley himself, and held sacred by his followers.

(5.) In this position the matter stood at the period of Mr. Wesley's death. The Conference possessed the power of ordination, even by imposition of hands, in the line in which their Founder stood, at any

time they chose to use it. A crisis soon arose, in an urgent desire, on the part of the people, for the sacraments amongst themselves. The Ministers, in deference to the opinion of their Founder, warded off the subject as often and as long as they could; but, being driven to the necessity of coming to some kind of conclusion, they took the most moderate course in their power. The points at issue were of the most grave and important nature; amounting, in reality, to the question, whether the great work which God had wrought should be given up, and left, like a wrecked vessel, to float in any direction in which chance might carry it; or, whether it should be conserved, the emergency provided for, and a solid basis for future peace and prosperity sought. The technicalities connected with controverted questions but ill exhibit them to superficial observers. This was the case at that time in the matters mooted in the debate. Beneath the exterior of the sacramental controversy lay the seeds of the dissolution of Methodism on the one hand, or the germ of an independent church-system on the other. Our fathers determined to take the latter course. How far the subject of ministerial qualification for giving the sacraments, without imposition of hands, came under consideration, I have not the means of knowing; but practically the Conference determined to rely on that SEPARATION and CONSECRATION to the holy ministry, which, as they believed, embraced the essence of ordination, rather than exercise the power they possessed, and formally go to the practice of the imposition of hands.*

* If this be deemed irregular by strict Churchmen, it may be as well to remind them of some few facts connected with this subject in the established Church. In answer to the question, "*Whether in the New Testament be required any consecration of a Bishop and Priest, or only appointing to the office be sufficient?*" Cranmer remarks, "In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a Bishop or a Priest, needeth no consecration by the Scripture; for election or appointing thereto is sufficient." In answer to another question, this Reformer says, "And at that time, forasmuch as the Christian people had no sword nor governor among them, they were constrained of necessity to take such Curates and Priests as either they knew themselves to be meet thereto, or else as were commended unto them by others, that were so replete with the Spirit of God, with such knowledge in the profession of Christ, such wisdom, such conversation and counsel, that they ought even of conscience to give credit unto them, and to accept such as by them were presented: and so sometimes the Apostles and others, unto whom God had given abundantly his Spirit, sent or appointed Ministers of God's word: sometimes the people did choose such as they thought meet thereunto; and when they were appointed or sent by the Apostles, or others, the people, of their own voluntary will, with thanks did accept them; not for the supremity, empire, or dominion, that the Apostles had over them to command, as their Princes and masters, but as good people ready to obey the advice of good counsellors, and to accept any thing that was necessary for their edification and benefit."

Again: in answer to the question, "*Whether a Bishop hath authority to make a Priest by the Scripture or no? and whether any other but only a Bishop may make a Priest?*" Cranmer replies, "A Bishop may make a Priest by the Scripture, and so may Princes and governors also, and that by the authority of God committed to them,

Candid and moderate men will think that they acted wisely; and that, in considering themselves qualified to administer the sacraments, they usurped no powers which did not legitimately belong to the ministerial office which they had, many of them, so long and so usefully held.

In this position the matter stood for some years, few doubting but that the right to administer the sacraments was assumed by men who had previously possessed the ministerial qualification without using it, in deference to the general usage. They who knew the men would have small difficulty in admitting their fitness for the right discharge of the function; and they who looked a little deeper than the human authority established in the ecclesiastical canons of a particular church, could not doubt their *divine right* to its exercise. It would require some acuteness to prove that men who had been intrusted with a call from God, and thus "*put into the ministry*," had not received a full commission, when, in truth, it was exercised in every way but this one. They had most successfully sustained the office of Evangelists, Superintendents, the administrators of discipline; and it would be difficult to show that such men as Benson, Pawson, Mather, Olivers, Clarke, Taylor, Wood, Entwisle, and their co-workers, went beyond their calling, when they administered the Lord's supper to the flocks over which the Chief Shepherd had made them overseers.

and the people also by their election; for as we read that Bishops have done it, so Christian Emperors and Princes have done it; and the people, before Christian Princes were, commonly did elect their Bishops and Priests." In answer to other questions relating to cases of urgent necessity, it is held by Cranmer, and many of the most celebrated theologians of the day, that it is not unlawful for laymen of every degree to preach the word of God, to administer the sacraments, and perform all the other functions of the ministry. (See Burnet's "Historical Records," vol. iii., sect. xxi., quest. 9—14.) Moreover, it is a curious fact, that the Reformed Church of England did not prepare any Reformed ordinal until 1550. Did Cranmer and his compeers use the old Popish service in the consecration of Bishops, and the ordination of Presbyters? or did they act on their own principle, as above stated, and appoint to the sacred office by election? This subject is involved in some obscurity; and yet, during the interval referred to, we have the record of the election of many of the Bishops of the Reformed period of Henry VIII., and no account of their consecration. Even Mr. Percival, in the list appended to his book on Apostolical Succession, has failed to produce any evidence of the consecration of these Bishops. Now, in case this should prove to be in fact, what it appears to be, as understood by the general laws of evidence; namely, that for several years during the early part of the Reformation, Bishops were appointed by election, and not by consecration; then what becomes of the doctrine of apostolical succession? These Bishops were appointed to their office without the communication to them by other Bishops of the power and grace supposed to be inherent in the Episcopal function. Consequently they were out of the line: their ordinations, supposing they performed any, must be invalid; their "*making the body and blood of Christ*" in the eucharist must in its turn fail; and as none can be saved but by partaking the sacrament so prepared, consequences the most disastrous must necessarily have followed.

(6.) When the field of Missionary enterprise enlarged, the right of ordination, by the imposition of hands, began to be exercised in the case of those who were appointed to Foreign Stations. An attempt to carry the same point, in regard of all who took upon them the full ministry in this country, met with a powerful resistance, on the ground of the validity of the existing vocation of the brethren: this was not disputed by those who considered the imposition of hands as more perfect; and, in the absence of something approaching to unanimity, the question for the time was abandoned. A few years rolled on, and then the usage was adopted without a dissentient voice.

From all this it appears that, *in fact*, we possess and exercise all the functions of a full and completed ministry; not merely in substance, but in form. This, then, is our fifth *note* of a church.

The whole case may be summed up in few words. The Methodist "UNITED SOCIETIES" constitute a communion of Christians, on the basis of the faith of the New Testament; these societies are spiritual, holy, living believers, united to Christ, and blessed with the influence of the Holy Spirit. A Christian service, embracing preaching, the sacraments, and such private meetings as tend to edification, is fully provided, and in constant practice; holy discipline, for the purposes of purity, conservation, and progress, founded on the word of God, is assented to, enforced, and observed; and a ministry converted, called of God, set apart and ordained by the pastorate, is in the full exercise of its functions. This we call a CHURCH.

They who arrogate to themselves the exclusive title of "the holy catholic church" will, of course, place us in the same category with the Lutheran, Reformed, and Scotch Churches, deny our title, and denounce us as heretics. From some of the very last prelatical Charges, there is reason to conclude that something more than this would be done, if "*that which letteth were taken out of the way.*" Whether this may be the case, and how soon, none can know. The times are most ominous. For the last few years a spirit has been abroad most hostile to the principles of the Reformation, and threatening the religious liberties of the country. We seem to be marked out as the first victims of this crusade. The peaceful exercise of our religious privileges and attempts to do good, are suddenly and every where opposed and assailed; we are, from the pulpit and the press, denounced as heretics, as well as schismatics; a quiet grave is refused to our dead; and exultation and joy are expressed at the prospect of breaking in upon our tranquil borders, and scattering our people. How soon and how suddenly are the tables turned! But a few fleeting years have passed since we were courted as allies, our assistance sought in the emergency of the Church, and our position allowed to be the very opposite of antagonist. In that dark day

we did not forget our Founder and his principles. A ready, frank, and willing *friendly* assistance was accorded. This was not ineffective. If we did not hold the balance in our hands, which, in the circumstances, is extremely probable, yet it was in our power to have greatly swelled the flood, and to have rendered resistance a more difficult task.* We sought no favour—we asked for no compromise—

* It is so unusual, and, at the same time, so refreshing, to meet with any thing like *truth*, when the character of our Founder and the spirit of Methodism are concerned, that we cannot deny ourselves the gratification of inserting the beautiful and eloquent eulogium on both, delivered at Oxford, in the recently-published Bampton Lectures, by the Rev. James Garbett.

"The period was full of danger; but, mean while, the providence of the Head of the church had been preparing from afar off the forces which were to resist the tempest. So long ago as the middle of last century, in the midst of the general slumber, two remarkable men had sprung up in the bosom of the Church, and had commenced that spiritual movement which, both within and without her, has never since been checked, but has gone swelling on and on, till it has pervaded the length and breadth of the land. Both of them were singularly endowed with popular eloquence, and the power of moving, as one man, the hearts of the greatest multitudes. But one of them, John Wesley, was as remarkable a man as any age or country has produced—resolute, calm, indefatigable—combining with a strong personal asceticism, a rare sympathy with the minds of other men—with the most piercing and far-reaching sagacity, that profound enthusiasm, which gives to great truths the power by which they overbear opposition, and conquer mankind—a mind legislational, systematic, creative, fixing what would have been, in other hands, the heats of the moment, in a permanent form; and embodying, in profoundly-calculated institutions, the spirit which, in the case of Whitefield, evaporated, after a few convulsive efforts, without any lasting result.

"Amongst the vehement opposition of authority, the scoffs and contempt of the learned, and the violences of popular outrage, these men succeeded in conveying spiritual consciousness, and the purifying influences of the Gospel, to wildernesses into which the Church had never attempted to penetrate—*and to thousands of souls within her pale*, whom the indifference of her Ministers had permitted to walk in darkness. But the power of these remarkable men lay in the great truths which they preached—truths which, from the beginning until now, have carried their own witness with them, and commanded the hearts of mankind. As, at the Reformation, it was the announcement of the Gospel, as contained in the written word, which moved men's souls so deeply; and, with all the drawbacks of enthusiasm, and the other evil influences which are always found to accompany the resuscitation, partial or general, of the religious spirit, it has permanently impressed an ameliorating influence on countless masses, which would otherwise have been abandoned to practical Heathenism. In the mean time, there was not wanting a succession of Ministers within the Church, who, through evil report and good report, announced the same long-neglected doctrines; and they had grown so strange to men's ears, that, though they are fundamental truths, and the very message of Christ, they were denounced at first as but little better than heresy. But gradually the spirit of reformation spread; the dead slumber of the Church was effectually broken; the once-despised doctrines were widely recognised, not only as the unquestionable truths of Scripture, but as the authorized teaching of the Church of England. Henceforth her Ministers ceased to be the 'apes of Epictetus;' they spoke to men's souls; they began *from* Christ, as the source of life, instead of working up *to* him; in one word, they preached Christ crucified, the beginning, the middle, and the end of our faith. Along with this bold and simple scriptural teaching there went necessarily, hand in hand, a less secular life in the established Clergy; an indefatigable zeal in all good works; an earnestness hitherto unknown; and a primitive abandonment of soul, and

we expected no sacrifice to be made to us. *But we had a right to expect peace.* War, however, has been proclaimed. This, it will be said by some, is not from authority. It is replied, Authority does not even attempt to stop or mitigate its course. No one can mistake the objects sought. They are evidently designed to maintain the Church, not merely as the Establishment of the nation, but as *per se —the holy Catholic Church*—and that other bodies are no churches at all, but heretical and schismatical rebels, to be hunted, harassed, beaten down, and overthrown by such weapons as the constitution allows. The issue is with God. In the mean time we take our position,—we trust in the spirit of prayer, meekness, and Christian love, but,—firmly, resolutely, and unalterably, as a branch of the one true church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

II. WE MAY NOW, IN REFERENCE TO THIS SUBJECT, APPLY THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE: "LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME THING."

1. By still acknowledging the supremacy and the sufficiency of holy Scripture.

This was a rule, a principle, an axiom, with our Founder and fathers. That which was not found clearly stated in the word of God, or could not be honestly and fairly deduced therefrom, was rejected. Every truth of the sacred oracles, whether relating to doctrines, experience, duties, order and government, was held as of equal and paramount obligation. THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE, constituted the foundation of that fabric of religion which, by the mercy of God, we have been enabled to rear. The beautiful passage of Mr. Wesley, in the Preface to his Sermons, expresses this sentiment in forcible and glowing language:—

"To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I

body, and substance, and every thing, so that Christ might be glorified, and his Gospel win its way in the hearts of men."

Of the conduct of the Methodist body, in the late troubles and dangers of the Church, this distinguished man has the candour to say,—

"The convulsions which, from the troubled depths of a diseased social system, threatened the overthrow of every existing institution, had taken a tone of decided hostility to the Church; and not only anarchist and infidel—which was natural—conspired her ruin; but, with the exception of the followers of Wesley, to whom the lasting gratitude of the Church is due, the great Dissenting bodies likewise; they were utterly reckless of ultimate consequences, and unmindful of the dangers which threatened the very existence of the Gospel in the overthrow of the Church, under whose mighty shadow they themselves had been sheltered." (Vol. ii., pp. 453, 458.)

drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* ('a man of one book'). Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does any thing appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights:—'Lord, is it not thy word, *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?* Thou *givest liberally, and upbraidest not.* Thou hast said, *If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know.* I am willing to do, let me know, thy will.' I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, '*comparing spiritual things with spiritual;*' I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach." He adds: "I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven; with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto that is not."

This passage is important, on account of its beautiful simplicity and piety, but much more so, in consequence of the Sermons in question being our standard of doctrine, not only assented to by every candidate for the ministry, but so referred to, by legal settlements, as to make it unlawful for any opposing doctrine to be taught from our pulpits, or in any of our Theological Schools. No secondary authority is here acknowledged, or ever has been, as co-ordinate with the Bible. Tradition, councils, creeds, catholic theology, or an infallible interpreter, are all discarded as in any sense occupying an equal place with the word of God. The sacred text alone, in our system, is clothed with divine authority, either in the sense of giving the rule of faith, or the precepts of practical religion. We are fully prepared to subscribe to the sixth Article of the English Church on this point: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed, as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of 'holy Scripture' we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church."

Let us tenaciously adhere to this sacred canon of Protestantism. It was not merely adopted as the rule of this or that particular church, but was, in fact, the great PRINCIPLE of the revival of religion effected by our fathers. Its practical adoption by the Reformers shook Popery to its foundations, and its continuance is essential to the evangelical character and useful expansion of these churches. Let any form of Christianity be built on any thing but the truth of God, and then it rests on a foundation of sand, because human; and let any parties endeavour to carry out their operations by means other than those furnished by Scripture, and they are instantly paralyzed as to spiritual good.

There is great occasion of fidelity to this rule from the opposition of antagonist powers. It may be safely affirmed, that no truth is in greater jeopardy than this. There are dangers from the refinements of philosophy; from the scepticism of many of the critics; from the tendency to centralize even religion, and consider it a compact of men, —a corporation,—rather than a question of individual faith in the truth of God. But we are in especial danger from the new "church principles" now in the course of developement. Religious duties, as regards men and churches, are of constant obligation. But there are seasons when an avowal, vindication, and propagation of great truths are especially necessary. The only divine authority of Scripture is one of the truths in question, and this one of the periods referred to. It is attempted to wrest this shield from the Protestant churches. This would be fair in the Church of Rome, though the evil itself would be the same as in other cases; but, professing, as she does, the equal authority of tradition and Scripture, and this being one of the authoritative dogmas enacted by her last council, and considered one of the infallible verities of the infallible Church, she, as such, has a right to enforce it. But what are we to say of avowed Protestants, attempting, by all the means in their power, to create a concurrent and equal authority with the word of God? This is now going on to a fearful extent. The parties making this attempt are an organized body, occupy high places, are in the most influential seat of education in the nation, are filling the young mind of the country with this and their other notions; from this seed-plot, so well and sedulously cultivated, it is to be rationally expected, that the next generation will be found to deny altogether the sufficiency of holy Scripture as the rule of faith; and the pulpits of our national Church will be filled by men who will preach another Gospel than that which is found in the Bible, as is the case at present, as far as the leaven has reached. These men meet at this point, it is true, a courteous, affectionate, gentle, and feeble resistance. The authorities re-assert the old doctrines of the Church, and reason with the gentlemen of the new school; at the same time, taking care to remove the edge both of reasons and of reproofs, by fulsome compliments

paid to their piety, honesty of purpose, purity of motive, and very eminent services rendered to the Church.

We leave these men to their own account. But what is our duty? It is to re-assert, to vindicate, and by all the means in our power to propagate the doctrine of the integrity, divinity, and sufficiency of the word of God; to protest against the introduction of this primary and most pernicious falsehood of Popery into the Church of the nation, not merely as corrupting the *truth* and the *religion* of the Establishment, but, if permitted, as vitiating its claim, as breaking the bond, as subverting its foundations, and as setting all those who adhere to the Protestant constitution of that church free from every form of allegiance.

These are strong words; but they are deliberately chosen. What do we behold before our eyes? We see a great CONSPIRACY in existence; its head-quarters, Oxford, the fountain-head of education, both theological and classical, and the place where the young nobility and candidates for holy orders are found in great numbers. This compact body teach their dogmas, containing all the essential elements of Popery, without any effective check or control; on the other hand, applause and encouragement are given them on the whole, and the effect is to render the English Church a purely popish hierarchy; and whether united to "*the mother of harlots*," or only claiming the relationship of "a dear daughter," is of little consequence, if the characteristics are the same. This question embraces something more than at first appears. It involves the truth; but it involves the rights of private judgment as well; and so certainly as this system becomes predominant, all freedom ceases. It begins with the Bible first, and puts it under human authority. It will next proceed to living men. The progress of events is most appalling. Tract No. 85 met with no reproof, and but little attention, though it treats the word of God on exactly the same principle as the same writer treats the Articles in No. 90. This latter offence has called for interposition, such as it is; but no defence is set up for the Bible. Then the question comes to this: Shall we stand by and see the leading, first, and germinant falsehood of Popery introduced into the Church, followed, as a matter of course, by all the rest, without uttering our protest? Our fathers founded their system on the Bible alone. By the divine grace, we will hold to this principle. In the case of our *demurrer* against the introduction of Popery into the Establishment, it may be objected that it is a question for the Church alone to decide, and that we have nothing to do in the business. This, under some circumstances, would be true. But this Church is *national*—we are a part of the nation—and if the compact betwixt the Church and nation is founded on Protestant grounds, and the one party—the Church—is rendering herself popish with a view to bring the other under the same superstí-

tion, then the compact is broken, and the position of the parties is altogether different. We are determined to oppose Popery wherever it exists, because it is, in its essential nature, opposed to that religion which we consider to be true and divine.

But how are these tendencies to undermine the authority of the word of God to be met and counteracted? One mode of guarding against this evil would be, if possible, to bring forward more fully and prominently the entire Bible. This would honour the sacred oracles in the sight of the people. The question referred to here may be made clear, by noticing the difference betwixt preaching from insulated texts as a mere motto, or adopting the essay style, and taking large portions of the word of God, and adopting the practice of exposition. The great want of the professing people of the age is, a large, comprehensive, and connected knowledge of the holy Scriptures. If this point could be secured, the new modes of seduction, by the authority of *tradition* and *catholic truth*, would be utterly unavailing. He who possesses an enlarged faith in the Gospel, enjoys an "*assurance of understanding*," as to the certainty and sufficiency of holy Scripture as the foundation or rule of faith. God has provided against these dark days of heresy, apostasy, and treason against his truth, by the glorious labours of the Bible Society. But the word of God cannot operate as a charm on the faith and experience of Christians, or raise a barrier against an antagonist power, by the multiplicity of its copies, and their merely being found in the hands or houses of those who profess to believe in its divinity. Its doctrines, principles, commands, and entire system must be wrought into the moral feelings and constitution of the members forming Christian churches; and by this innate light, assurance, power, and comfort, the traditionary assault must be resisted and overcome.

But it is very much the fashion, in the controversies now going on, for the opponents of the Bible to draw us from scriptural ground, and make the battle-field, human authority, and the writings of uninspired men. This is done with some plausibility. The Scriptures are not entirely discarded; but they cannot be understood, it is affirmed; and the Fathers of the first four centuries are to be the interpreters. We should like to know which is the more difficult of comprehension, —the Bible, or these heterogeneous, clashing, contradictory, and ever-varying commentators? But the device answers. It draws us, when successful, from the simple authority of the word of God; it admits the necessity of a human ecclesiastical authority as a standing teacher of divine truth; it thus transfers the confidence of the believing church from the covenant of God to *catholic truth*, so propounded; it thus annihilates the right of private judgment and of individual faith; and it makes the church a *corporate body*, and salvation a *corporate* blessing given or withheld at the pleasure of the priesthood.

The evangelical church—our branch amongst the rest—owes it to herself to meet all this on scriptural ground alone, and once more to place Christianity on the Bible. The numerous questions now mooted, and made the subject of so much angry and vehement debate, may be reduced to one; namely, Whether the Bible, and only the Bible, shall continue to be the religion of Protestants. If this is to be the case, then all Christians will have to bear their witness. To wrest the holy Scriptures from us is the policy of the CONSPIRACY; this done, it is confidently felt, that every claim, however insulting to God, and oppressive to man, may be carried; and when the light of the divine word is extinguished, it will be perfectly practicable to establish the old Popish idolatry on the foundations of the Protestant religion. Let us, in the midst of this portentous struggle, keep within the citadel of truth prepared by our fathers; rest on the doctrine of the divine sufficiency of the holy Oracles as on a rock; insist on the right of every man to read this word of God, and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit form his faith and experience on its rules; and resist the attempt to set aside the sufficiency of this plenary, inspired, and perfect rule of faith, as the worst form of impiety, and as infallibly introductory of every species of error and superstition.

2. Let us still preserve our church-system in its integrity.

We cannot but recollect that it originated in an urgent necessity, and that it cannot be abandoned till the necessity ceases. Not only the wants of our own country, but those of the world, demanded, at the time, the enlarged developement of Christian truth, which our economy proposed and accomplished. No ecclesiastical system practically embraced the outcast, ignorant, and immoral population of the nation. They lay, in dense masses of profligacy and crime, unpitied and unprovided for. Hence the origin of our itinerancy. It adopted the obligation of visiting these poor and perishing men; of carrying to them the ordinances of religion, which their state prevented them from desiring for themselves; it looked upon them as redeemed, the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and as capable of all the blessings of the Gospel; and, at the greatest expense of personal ease, reputation, and social happiness, on the part of those who undertook the self-denying task, this provision of our economy has long been prosecuted. Can this work be abandoned, or the evangelical principle on which it rests be sacrificed? We believe that, in any state of the world,—unless the millennium shall entirely alter its moral condition,—a necessity will always exist for the evangelizing and aggressive operations of the church. This branch of duty, then, must still remain with us—our opprobrium or our glory.

A powerful and pressing necessity also arose, from the awakened state of the thousands who listened to the ministry of our fathers, for religious communion. Hence the establishment of our class-

meetings, and similar means. It was found, that a mere attendance upon the public preaching and monthly sacraments, could not meet the case of those who were anxiously inquiring, "*What they must do to be saved?*" Personal and direct instruction, encouragement afforded in the duty of believing in the Saviour, and express advice and sympathy on the respective subjects of experience, temptation, inward conflict, and the painful exercises of the divine life, were not only useful, but, in keeping up the spirit of true religion, absolutely essential. Can these be abandoned? Is there not the same necessity for this assistance, stimulus, encouragement, and these guards, as ever? Who will take up this part of our economy, promote this communion of the saints, and lead the people forward in the way to heaven by this form of pastoral care? We know very fully that these meetings, though, in their spirit and design, perfectly scriptural, are not in sufficient repute to be adopted by others. Then these means of grace, so intimately connected with the vitality of religion, cannot be abandoned, because the piety and holiness of which they are very much the conservative power, cannot be sacrificed.

We believe the provisions of our economy originated in the simple operation of the truths of Scripture. The Conference, which is our chief ministerial synod, sprung from the meeting of the fathers of our church, to consult as to what they should teach, and how they should best accomplish the end of teaching; to lay down schemes and plans of usefulness; to examine and induct candidates for the ministry; and to exercise a wholesome discipline over the whole body of Ministers as well as people. This is in exact agreement with the spirit, if not with the literal practice, of primitive times. The subordinate meetings for business connected with our Circuits had a similar origin. They were designed to meet the wants and exigencies of the church as it rose into being and into form, and all had a practical and business-like purpose. These cannot be given up, except it should be determined to abandon the whole design. They constitute the power which works the entire machine; and, if other parties were willing, they could not place themselves at the several posts of duty so as successfully to conduct its operations.

But this church-system not only bears the marks of springing from the natural growth of scriptural truth, but of being fostered by the care and blessing of God. The Ministers who first began the work contented themselves with simply sowing the seed of the kingdom of Christ; and as the harvest grew, the great Husbandman himself provided the fence. They did not spend their energy, genius, and inventive powers, in framing a constitution, and then determine to operate on the platform thus prepared; but they held themselves bound to follow the guidance of Providence; and as exigencies arose, they were met by provisions so simple, harmonious, and beautiful, as to show that they

sprang from the highest wisdom. Complexity is a sign of expediency; simplicity, of the operation of unembarrassed truth, under the guiding hand of God. One mind, indeed, existed, admirably formed to be the instrument of all this; that mind possessed extraordinary clearness, depth, compass, submissive docility in the things of God, singleness of purpose, unbending firmness, and wisdom at once penetrating and practical, and, withal, untiring zeal, as if a perpetual spring-tide of youth and strength were granted for the purposes of his employment. God works by the human mind as his chief instrument; and when we see men arise to perform extraordinary services in his church, it would be impious not to acknowledge his guiding wisdom and providential care.

Then, when we examine this church-system, from any point, we may learn our own duties and obligations. Do we refer to its origin? We perceive it to arise from the belief of the truth in the living mind, and thus to spring from the Bible itself. Do we examine the mode of its advancement? We find the seed sown in the most unpropitious soil, in the midst of sin, ignorance, and barbarity; small in the "*blade*,"—weak, delicate, and tender,—and yet it grows till a great tree spreads forth its foliage, and gives its shelter and fruit to myriads. Do we look at the agents employed, and the field of their labours? We witness two things, —extraordinary suffering, and forbidding sterility. Yet they labour on, unwearied and undismayed,—"*cast down, but not destroyed*,"— till, by repeated strokes, the rock is rent, and the scattered stones form a beautiful temple to the Lord. Do we watch the movement of the "*pillar of fire and of cloud*," in this march through the wilderness? We behold it stop to point out the places where water may be found in the arid desert; where a safe encampment may be adventured upon; and where and when the next movement may be securely undertaken. No: this system bears too many marks of the divine blessing,—it is too vital and full of life,—it has secured to us too many privileges,—it has given nutriment to too many souls,—it has created too wide a field for the Gospel message,—and it is endeared to us by too many holy associations, to be abandoned by the present generation of its disciples.

3. In all preceding time our ancestors held themselves at liberty to promote the largest and highest developements of the principles and power of the kingdom of God: "*Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*"

This is one of the fundamental laws of our system. Our fathers considered it a duty to follow the leadings of divine Providence, in the extension of the work of God. They never bound themselves to one specific mode of doing good and saving souls, or of preaching the Gospel and extending the Redeemer's kingdom, as the *divine right* of Methodism. A distinction has ever been preserved between things essential, scriptural, and divine, and those which are non-essential,

unsettled, and left very much to the judgment of the living church. The fundamental portions of Christianity they held to be its unalterable and immutable truths; but to limit the promulgation of these truths to one class of men, and bind even them to a strict canonical code, beyond which they should not be at liberty to sow the seed of life, they esteemed not merely as non-essential, but pernicious; inasmuch as it restricts the church's freedom, prevents the progress of the kingdom of Christ, and interferes with the free action —on merely human authority—of good men in seeking the salvation of their fellow-sinners.

It is clear that the New Testament does not enforce *any* ecclesiastical code. We have no pattern of the Christian church given in Mount Zion, as was given to Moses in Horeb; no dimensions, furniture, utensils, priestly robes, specific manner of service, as was the case in the Jewish temple. The simple reason is, Christianity is designed to be universal, to embrace the whole family of man, and to give its light, grace, holiness, and blessings to all the world. How, then, can this system minister its mercy in the same modes? The New Testament furnishes us with great PRINCIPLES, GENERAL RULES, PRECEDENTS, and EXAMPLES, for our guidance; and then affords freedom as to the circumstantials of time, manner, and the employment of means, for the introduction of the Gospel into uncultivated regions, and the external growth of its truth and grace. Human restrictions have, in all ages, been as a drag-chain on the movements of Christianity itself. The church has never been able to fulfil her commission, because she has placed herself under the cumbersome load of these narrow and restrictive rules. It is not only her privilege, but her duty, to liberate herself from these chains; that, with mind and heart unfettered and free, she may be in a position to execute the Lord's commission. This freedom has been retained hitherto in our body, and at present it is, if possible, more essential than ever.

It only requires a very cursory knowledge of the word of God, and of the true nature of the kingdom of our Lord, to perceive, that though no new truth can be expected in Christianity, yet new developements of both truth and grace may be anticipated, on a much larger, deeper, and broader scale than is at present witnessed. How shall the prophecies be fulfilled, Christianity become universal, the world be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, and the long-predicted period of Messiah's triumph over the false systems now so predominant, be accomplished, except by an enlargement of the basis of the church's operations? Most assuredly, few things are less like each other, than the picture given us of religion in the "*latter-day glory*," and its present narrow, sectarian, pugnacious character; and if in this, as in the ordinary affairs of the world,

the foundation is to sustain the splendid building exhibited to view, it is certain that it must be adjusted anew, and the church built not upon the theories of parties, as on Episcopacy, or any other form; it must be left to repose on its divine foundation,—the counsels of God, the atonement of Christ, and the universal covenant of grace. Then, again, this fundamental truth being preserved in its just and unalterable immutability, the salvation of men may be sought without the labours of Ministers being fettered by technical rules, or party distinctions.

That this principle has ever been regarded in our own body, may be easily illustrated. The provision made by Mr. Wesley to meet the wants of Scotland, already referred to, may be adduced. It was found that the usual mode of doing good in England did not suit the state of things in that country; and, in consequence of this absence of adaptation, the work of God did not prosper as in other places. Did the Founder of our societies determine, doggedly and pertinaciously, to adhere to one mode of operation? Instead of this, he deviated entirely from his accustomed practice, ordained Ministers for that portion of the Gospel-field, and sanctioned *church principles* which, to say the least, were very different from those he adopted in this part of the nation. In the American case, we have another illustration of the point on which we are dwelling. When the United States had effected their emancipation from the mother-country, Mr. Wesley considered himself at liberty to act with perfect freedom in the new territory, and, we may say, to develope his views and opinions fully; and, if we mistake not, it is to the American Methodist Episcopal Church that we are to look for the *real* mind and sentiments of this great man. Obstructions removed, he instantly seized the opportunity of appointing an entire church-system, on the principle of moderate Episcopacy. And if we may judge of the wisdom and piety of the design by its usefulness and success, certainly we shall be prepared to consider it most providential. No church in modern times has made any thing like the progress which is seen in this branch of our community. But the question was introduced not so much to state the amount of success which followed the establishment of this scheme, as to point out the principle of adaptation observable in its adoption. We see, in this case, that when it was discovered to be essential to the well-being and growth of a particular section of the body, that a somewhat different form of discipline and order should be established from that which existed at home, the change was at once effected.

The determination of the Conference to allow the administration of the sacraments, and the rules made on that subject, are a further illustration of the same principle. The history of this is well known. The societies found themselves in an altered position after Mr. Wesley's death. The ordinances were earnestly desired, and it was deter-

mined to allow of their administration under certain regulations. Many parties imagined that this and other litigated points must break up the whole body. But no sane man, unless biassed by party feeling, would say that the non-ordinance system then prevailing must, as an essential and necessary thing, prevail for ever. Hence the alteration was made, the remedy applied; and, instead of the Connexion being broken up and scattered, the sacraments became a bond of union, and the means of life.

The formation of the Missionary Society is another case in point. When the world opened scenes of increased usefulness, and God indicated his will that we should enter these open doors, it was not considered necessary that the old system of evangelical enterprise should be adhered to. Hence a new spring was added to the machine; a society was formed, not independent of the church, not with an action and movement of its own; but as the channel of the church's bounty and zeal, in the conversion of the world.

By these several examples we see that Methodism has always held itself free to follow the commands of the Head of the church, and to act on the largest teachings of the truth. We are not at liberty to compromise any portion of the Gospel; but we are not limited in the mode of making it known. The atonement, for instance, as a truth, is unalterably and eternally fixed: and this not only as a fact in the annals of the universe, but in its relations to justification, holiness, and all the blessings of religion. No church is at liberty to tamper with this great verity. But this is not the question. It is, Whether this doctrine of the Saviour's death shall only be announced, and its benefits administered, *Episcopally*, or in some other limited channel. We repudiate this notion, and hold that no such limitations are found in the word of God itself, and that no human authority possesses the right to impose them. And on the much-disputed matter of *church principles*, we say, that, as found in the New Testament, they are incapable of the restrictions attempted to be imposed. We believe that, had our fathers been called to it, they would have sealed their attachment to the truth of God with their blood. But they distinguished betwixt this truth and the vehicle of its transmission. Let us, then, firmly adhere to the real doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; but let us, at the same time, cautiously guard against restrictive canons. We have hitherto held ourselves free to do good on the largest scale; we know not to what extent it may please God to employ us in the salvation of the world; and it is obviously our duty to be in readiness to obey his counsels and his calls.

4. Our position amongst the churches has always been held in a catholic spirit, so as to fraternize with them in every thing evangelical. "*Let us*" still "*walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*"

The annals of our history cannot furnish an instance in which we have been the aggressors on the much-debated points of ecclesiastical order. Having never bound ourselves down to any merely human scheme, imagining it to be divine, we have been under no temptation to dispute with others on account of their peculiar forms.

We acknowledge a "*common salvation,*" belonging to all true believers in Jesus Christ, whatever may be the external form of church-communion by which they profess and exhibit their faith. The truth of God is one, complete, and perfect in its own beautiful fulness, irrespective of any human modes of symbolizing and setting it forth to mankind. This is catholic, eternal, immutable; which cannot possibly be mutilated, narrowed, minified into the insignificance of sectarianism, whether ancient or modern. Where is this truth to be found but in the holy Scriptures? Hence those churches which believe in the inspired word of God, so far as that point is concerned, repose on the largest possible foundation. It follows that their catholicity does not depend on the form they take, but on the doctrines they embrace. It would be just as reasonable for the turbaned nations to affirm, that the proof of manhood lay in flowing robes,—or for the western nations to controvert this by arguing that the evidence rather lay in the close dress of the Europeans,—as to attempt to fasten the immutable and ethereal verities of God to any specific forms, or to put them into one uniform costume, and affirm that the dogmas not found in that particular dress had no right to the claim of catholicity. Can any absurdity be greater than this? Yet such is the pretence of Popery and its *mimic* followers. The glorious attributes and grace of God are not, on this assumption, the same, if exhibited in the Bibles or the pulpits of real Protestants, as they would be if set forth in the Bibles and services of THE holy Catholic Church! The same objection lies against all the other verities of the Gospel. The Deity of Christ, the atonement, the Mediator's grace, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, when represented beyond the Tweed, or taught by Dr. Chalmers, are not the same as when found on this side of the Tweed, and taught in the "holy Catholic Church" established on the south side of the border! In one of these cases the doctrine taught is heretical, or, if not in itself, it is made so by passing through the lips of a certain class of men, and loses its effect; in the other, it is perfectly orthodox, be its substance what it may, and is consequently effective and saving. This mere *modus,* as far as we are able to understand the matter, is considered to constitute the essential attributes of catholicity; for it will not be denied that most of the Protestant bodies as truly hold all the Articles of Faith contained in the Creeds of the Church of England, as the most zealous disciples of that form of Christianity. Will it then be said, that the

vital and saving efficacy of the truth is lost, because it is not professed in this identical order? Yet this, in fact, constitutes the only difference betwixt the Gospel as held by one party in contrast with that held by another.

If it be objected, that the notions entertained respecting catholic truth do not relate to the Bible, but to the interpretation of its doctrines; and that to the teaching from the inspired volume rightly belongs the character and name; we reply, that mere teaching must necessarily be as sectarian in one case as in another, for the simple reason, that it is human. Who would willingly leave the high, holy, heavenly, and sublime region of really catholic truth, as revealed in the holy Scriptures, which is so universal as to exhibit all that can be known of God, the Saviour, salvation, and immortality;—who, we say, would leave this pure and perfect region, for the dark chaos of human opinion, fallaciously graced by this term?

We have been taught to respect men and churches for the "*truth's sake;*" and we are still called upon to "*walk by the same rule.*" Why should any peculiar modes of thinking be an occasion of separation, if the parties concerned have been taught of God, believe in the Saviour, and manifest a real spirit of religion? The points on which they agree in faith and experience, are the really necessary subjects; and those on which they disagree are certainly not of essential moment, inasmuch as they neither keep them from the cross, nor debar them an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The same is the case with regard to churches. Those which hold the doctrines of our Lord's atonement, justification by faith only, and the necessity of the new birth, may surely so far dismiss minor points, as to establish a confraternity of affection, allow each other's claims, assist and aid in the promotion of the common good, and endeavour, by every means, to remove the projectiles of spleen and party-spirit, standing in the way of actual fellowship, and to smooth the path to a higher and richer dispensation of the catholic spirit.

It is the peculiar and imperative duty of all who really hold evangelical truth, to cultivate the spirit of union. The times call for this: the elements of the opposite tendency are converging to a point of fearful combination. Party names are adopted, and party colours are hoisted; but the *animus* of the anti-evangelical movement is one. It is no stranger on earth, and is only singular by being the last incarnation of the Evil One. The same thing immediately followed the first preaching of the Gospel: "*the mystery of iniquity*" soon began "*to work.*" We have now a new muster of the "*powers of darkness;*" but the old feature of opposition,—"*he that is born after the flesh persecuting him that is born after the Spirit;*" (Gal. iv. 29;)—this is seen through every disguise; and though the movement assumes the pretence of great forbearance and "*zeal for*

the Lord of hosts," yet the purpose evidently is, to crush evangelical religion by the creation of an ecclesiastical power, either moral or otherwise, capable of controlling the state of the Christian profession,—probably independent of Rome, if practicable, but, rather than not accomplish this object, in union with that church.

In this threatening state of affairs, it is not the time for us to be either indifferent or sectarian. Whilst we claim from others the rank of a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be willing to accord this claim—together with affection and respect—to the followers of our Lord, wherever found. We have always, in profession, spurned a narrow sectarianism; let us do so in spirit. We have, indeed, often been obliged to speak strongly in vindication of ourselves, when violently assailed as at present; but let it be known, that bigotry is not the congenial element of our church. The soul of our system is, we trust, in agreement with our doctrines, which are all universal; and, amongst others, that of universal love is sacredly held. Our principles, our economy, our objects, are too great, naturally, to allow the little viper, sectarianism, to coil itself in our community, and hiss forth its hatred against all, however excellent, who are not found to be of our party.

There is a living spirit in all churches which must, in its reaction, fix their destinies. If they settle on some narrow notions, they necessarily partake of the insignificance of their adopted opinions. Communities professing adherence and fealty to a sectarian and uncharitable creed, will, however high their pretences, become, in mind, heart, and feeling, that which their theory is in principle. How can the building stand out beyond its foundation? Now, as we are not cramped and limited in our creed, we ought not to be so in our feelings. Let us move on the dimensions of our own *ideal* system, or rather of that truth of God which we have been taught. That which is universal embraces every thing,—the little and the great. Whilst we are prepared to perform the least service for our Lord, let us be equally ready to perform the highest, the noblest, and the most costly. Our principles will bear any weight; our doctrines, carried out, will lead to great, extended, and general efforts to glorify God; success, on the scale of the truths which we hold, must issue in the triumphs of the Gospel in every part of the world: and, moreover, should the spirit of controversy, the pressure of opposing forces, the selfish pusillanimity and cowering of our own hearts, the want of zeal and generosity, and especially the decay of faith, holy love, devoted piety, and large and comprehensive views and feelings;—should any or all of these sinister evils shrivel us up to the littleness of party, the bigotry of sectarianism, and the asperities of religious animosity, and lead to the working out of the interests of a selfish sect;—then we

shall belie every doctrine we hold,—every sentiment we have been taught,—the brightest examples of our ancestors,—the work of God as it stands before us,—and, most of all, the very truth of the glorious Gospel itself.

5. Our community has hitherto employed its organization and strength in purely spiritual objects: "*Let us*" still "*walk by*" this "*rule, let us mind*" this "*thing.*"

Our system denies no man his civil rights, freedom of opinion, or a proper standing in society. But it has ever denied *itself* the practice of employing its religious organization for worldly purposes. Like a noble vessel, it has sought for itself an open sea, and deep water, lest it should be stranded on some of those numerous rocks of earthly association and policy, on which others have been wrecked. Freedom of action can only be secured by this. When a church of Christ admits the co-ordinate power of some earthly interest, it then loses a large amount of its religious character and freedom. The motives, passions, and schemes of human policy, intermixed with the Gospel kingdom, necessarily bring the spiritual features of the institution to a resemblance to secular government, and greatly impair its efficiency and vigour. The dissemination of the truth is, in such cases, retarded; the indefeasible rights of the ministry are interfered with; the just freedom of the people of God, in their individual and aggregate association, compromised; and the laws of Christ subordinated to the *ordinances* of man. This state of things has never taken place but by the corrupt assent, connivance, or solicitation of the church. In the loss of truth, purity, and piety, the master-passion of fallen man—ambition—is found to be as common in ecclesiastics as in other persons; and a careful examination of the question will show, that all the evils referred to have sprung from this fountain. To array the church in the gorgeous attributes of worldly greatness; to secure her dominion, authority, and power; to free her from the obligation of obedience to civil government, even in secular things; and then to put down all good men, and associations of believers, as heretics, schismatics, and rebels; have been the leading policy of bodies calling themselves by the Christian name. To effect these worldly alliances, means have been employed which would have been inimical to religion, had it existed; but as the matter stood, nothing was lost, because nothing was possessed; whilst a return to right principles has ever been rendered infinitely difficult, because of the amalgamation of the two elements and the two interests,—the secular and the spiritual.

This is the secret of much that is stigmatized as schism. Causes have been sought, and probable reasons assigned, for the numerous separations which have taken place from the Establishment in this country. The parties have been blamed in no very measured terms for the sin of rebellion; but the true cause has often been put aside.

To place the subject in as inoffensive a point of view as possible, it may be affirmed, that when a number of men obtain the right faith of the Gospel, and feel the force of truth on their consciences, they immediately perceive themselves "*under the law to Christ;*" this impels them to obey his word in propagating the Gospel; they have been impeded in this, and harassed, and persecuted, so as to be driven to seek, in a separate fellowship, repose and a freedom to obey God. This is our own case. Our position gives us liberty to follow the Lord according to the injunctions of his own blessed word. Let us, therefore, "*stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*" (Gal. v. 1.)

This spirituality of purpose and object has been our strength. The power of the church is its purity and holiness. Let any individual believer unduly entangle himself with the affairs of this life, and he is instantly shorn of his strength, and becomes "*as other men.*" In like manner, when a Christian body yields itself to worldly views and influences, it loses its beauty and strength at the same time. The Spirit of God breathes softly or powerfully on a people who present for the visitation a pure and elevated piety, a believing and obedient heart, a retiring and self-denying spirit, the habit of supplication and prayer, and a living exhibition of the truth. This working and operation of the Spirit of God is the life of the church, and is never found but in union with spiritual minds and spiritual institutions. A worldly policy can never be a fit channel for the waters of life to flow through; and although a combination of men may possess the power to exact obedience to its mandates, whilst the spirit, end, and means employed all quadrate with earthly dominion; yet it is always found that such bodies are powerless in saving mankind, and imparting the consolations and hopes of religion. The strength of our community has been its unmixed spiritual organization and designs; let this continue, and we may humbly and confidently hope, that Almighty God will still employ us in the extension of his truth and the salvation of the world.

But the spirituality of which we speak has, all along, been our bond of union. Not on human and earthly, but on common religious, interests, this fellowship has ever been kept up; and it is safe in proportion to the predominance of this feeling. The architects of formalism are building their fabric with fragile materials. The attractions of external show and fascinating ceremonials, cannot last long. The passions grow cold with age; they loose their grasp on the withering enchantment; and the new sentiments of the next generation will demand a fresh creation. Those who are labouring in this vocation must go farther, or lose their labour. The understanding being out of the question, and the heart finding no

food for its best feelings, a superstition of horror must be contrived; the conscience must be blinded and coerced, and the imagination must be taught to roam in a world of fancied furies.

It is different with the fellowship of Christian love. This is intelligible, cordial, enduring. It is not an objective union merely, an attraction of the eyes, the fancy, the taste;—it is the religion of the heart. It is founded in salvation equally enjoyed in Christ; the similarity of nature experienced in the new birth; the convergence of minds and hearts, attracted to each other by like graces, joys, and objects; and it is the warm impulse of the divine affections. "*Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*" (1 John v. 1.) Religion has, in its own element, been our all in all. Let it be cherished, strengthened, and invigorated. God dwells in the pious heart, and he equally lives in the spiritual church. With his presence and grace, we shall be omnipotent; in his absence, every thing must fall into decay and ruin.

We have finished the review of our *status* as a church. The ground we have trodden has been perilous. Many things have been "set down, not in malice," but in unmixed pain. Parties in that Church for which we have ever cherished the sincerest respect and affection, and which it has been our unfeigned desire to honour and support,—have obliged us to speak in the language of severity. This is a subject of sorrowful regret. But we owe more to the truth than to man; and to desert or fail to vindicate that great work which God has wrought amongst us, would, in his sight, be esteemed as apostasy from it, and probably be visited by the withdrawal of his long-continued grace and blessing. We believe the men who have put the agitation in motion against ourselves, are the worst, the most dangerous, and also the most *dishonourable*, enemies with whom the *real* Church of England has had to contend since the days of Laud; and, in some of its features, the present "CONSPIRACY" is much more fearful and formidable than even that in which Laud himself was concerned.

But, turning from this disagreeable part of the subject, what, we ask, do we see in our own position? Much to excite our gratitude,—much to cause us great accountability,—and much to create great solicitude. That God has displayed such extraordinary grace to us, may well teach us thankfulness. How great the number who have been already saved! And how numerous the witnesses now on earth to the power of the Gospel! This is our joy and crown of rejoicing. But it ought to call forth our gratitude that, against such a time of trial,—we may say, such a falling away and apostasy from the standard of Christian truth,—as the present, the great Head of the church has, we trust, in some measure, provided for the calamity, by raising up a body which is separate, independent, and free to act; and which, we are sure, cannot, except

perhaps in a few individual cases, be either seduced or dismayed. Light now begins to shine on this our independent position,—its reasons in the divine counsels, and its mercy to the world. In despite of all attempts (and they have been numerous) at absorption or amalgamation, some kind of hidden and intangible influence and power has gone on, working in the body, till it has become too numerous, too complicated, and too compact, to admit of coherence with any other. This has perplexed and saddened many hearts, at different periods, both within and without our *United Societies*. But the "*end is known from the beginning*" by the Lord; and we doubt not that the whole mystery will be made manifest, and most likely at a period not far distant. Let our chief thanks, however, be presented to God, that he has provided so extended a means of preaching and conserving his truth, of training up a spiritual church, and of seeking the salvation of mankind.

But privileges and responsibility stand in close connexion. "*Where much is given, much is required.*" Our stewardship is of a most solemn nature. Nothing can fit us for it but deep humility, much prayer, singleness of purpose, deliberative wisdom, the absence of earthly passions,—of ambition, self-indulgence, avarice,—as well as union, brotherly love, exalted piety, and laborious zeal. The hand which steers our vessel safely through the perilous seas surrounding us must be, indeed, more than human. Let us implore His grace, and stand to our post. There are seasons when neither an ordinary amount of capacity, nor of self-sacrifice and zeal, will meet the demands of duty. This is one of those times. We have always been much more a working than a speculative people. If possible, we are bound by every consideration to become tenfold more active, diligent, and laborious than ever in the conversion of souls to God—ready to rush into every open door, to carry with us the "*glad tidings of great joy.*" But with the hands of the labourer we must have corresponding vigilance; with untiring industry we must have presiding mind; with the power to "*do good*" we must have the courteous courage to see that it is not "*evil spoken of.*" God has, in every period of our history, supplied us with agents for every kind of work; and if we continue to obey his call, and to do his will, no exigency can arise in which he will not, out of the fulness of his Spirit, do so still.

Hence, while anxious, we are full of confidence. Great things await us, either in the form of disaster or progress. A church which rests on the extended platform now occupied by our people and institutions, cannot be agitated, disturbed, split, broken up, and wrecked,—which is the obvious hope of some of our enemies,—without leaving a mighty chasm, and producing a sort of moral earthquake. And, on the other hand, we cannot remain and prosper

without great results. A religious system which rests nearly on every shore, and which, in some parts of the world, embodies an immense number of disciples,—at the same time possessing means of moral influence and usefulness of a very powerful nature,—cannot proceed on the scale even of natural growth without producing great effects. The magnitude of our body; the extent of interests involved; the success granted; the number of people in our fellowship; and the connexion of the whole with the destinies of the world at large; may well, on occasions like this, fill the mind with anxious thought. What God may do with us, we know not. Our duty is plain. It is, to remain faithful to our principles, our doctrines, our church-polity, our fellowship, our objects of doing good;—"*to be of good courage, and play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God,*" and then in humility to say, "*Let the Lord do that which seemeth him good.*" (2 Sam. x. 12.)

PART III.

IN FURTHER CONSIDERING OUR POSITION AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, IT WILL BE REQUISITE TO JUDGE OF THE PRINCIPLES ADOPTED, AND THE MEANS EMPLOYED, TO EXTEND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND EVANGELIZE THE WORLD.

THE character of a church must be judged of, not merely by its own internal organization and communion, but by its spirit and action in fulfilling the designs of Christianity itself. In addition to apostolic doctrines, there must be found apostolic practice, or a church cannot be considered as primitive in character. It may, indeed, be questioned whether purity of doctrine can long remain with any people, unless the saving designs of the Gospel be carried out. This point seems somewhat analogous to that of experimental and practical religion. A believer will attain the privileges of grace irrespective of good works, by faith only; and although he will retain these privileges on the same ground, yet it must be a faith working by love, producing holiness, and leading to good works, otherwise the state of blessing must be forfeited and lost. It is the same with a community. In case there is a deposit of truth, a dispensation of the Gospel given, a spiritual communion, rich gifts, and the ministerial function, together with the means of its exercise:—then, there must be evangelical exertions, diligence in extending the kingdom of our Lord, otherwise the blessing must be forfeited, or, what amounts to the same thing, the body will become corrupt, lifeless, or extinct. A church which is destitute of the Spirit, and fails in the work of evangelization, must

have lost its calling, or, at least, be in a backsliding state, and need reformation, on the simple ground, that one of its unquestionable duties is, to carry on an aggressive warfare against the idolatry, sin, and evils of the world.

I. WE POSSESS TWO OR THREE SEVERAL RULES OF SCRIPTURE ON THIS SUBJECT, WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED AS MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH.

1. Acting on the apostolic commission is one: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.)

That the obligation to perform this duty rests on the church in all ages, is evident from the latter part of the passage. The terms "*alway, even unto the end of the world,*" show that the commission extended to all times. Every other portion of instruction given to the Apostles, on the question of extending the knowledge of the Saviour's name, accords with this full and complete commission. It follows from this, that the possession of the aggressive attribute is, in all ages and places, essential to the character of a primitive and apostolical body. When we find this PRINCIPLE embodied in the constitution of a church, its spirit cherished, and means adopted to carry the Lord's message universally through the world; then this primary appointment may be considered as adopted and taken up. That the commission cannot be assumed by individual Ministers; and, consequently, must be embraced as a *church-principle,* to be carried out by arrangement and concert; is evident from the fact, that it is not in the power of individual men to accomplish it. What right, then, can any community have to claim for itself the qualities, powers, and grace of a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ, if it fail to execute his commission? Allowing that, in some sense, *the succession* doctrine is true; that there really exists a ministry which stands in the position of the first teachers of the Gospel; where are we to look for it so much as amongst the churches which act on the principle of extending that Gospel to all the world?

Surely this vocation is not limited to a mere designation to office—a title—a name. It contains a great commission; and none can have a right to the name of apostolical churches which do not, practically, obey the injunctions of the Lord Jesus on this subject. Their pretences otherwise are something like the obsolete custom of the Monarchs of this nation, in assuming the heraldry, insignia, and name of "Kings of France," for so many ages after we had lost every foot of land in that kingdom, and nothing remained but the empty title. So it has been with many churches claiming to be primitive. The name has

remained as a symbol of departed glory, but without any vestige of its spirit and power. For ages and ages, some of these bodies have been nestling in their own corruptions, without any consideration of the wants and dangers of the world, or any kind of means adopted to carry out our Lord's command. How, then, it may be asked, can that church be apostolical, or its Ministers the successors of the apostolic "Order," which fails to execute the commission delivered by Christ into the hands of these honoured servants? If one thing is a more unequivocal mark of a body of Christians being intrusted with this commission than another, it is its actual execution. How could it be executed unless it were given? and how can it be given where it is not executed? This will be an evidence of a true church in all ages.

2. The example of primitive times, as well as the apostolic commission, will show that a church, to be scriptural, must be constituted on the principle of aggression.

It is easy to perceive, on the evidence of the sacred narrative alone, that the ancient societies of Christians were constituted on this basis. They were not isolated and independent bodies; existing for themselves alone; confining their prayers, charity, preaching, economy, and means, to the matter of mere self-edification. All these, indeed, were regarded in their place. But the strength of the central church was built up, that it might be in a condition to act on the surrounding world, as well as to enjoy blessings in itself.

The disciples at Jerusalem constituted one of these central bodies, which by its spiritual movements first touched the nearest portions of territory and population around, but, in its remote results, reached the ends of the earth. From the upper room where the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, was given, the Apostles and Evangelists went forth in power to proclaim the glad tidings of Gospel peace and salvation. We have many interesting circumstances connected with these earliest exertions of the mother church to extend to other places the light and mercy which she had received. Though the impulse was new, the faith of the disciples steadfast, and their love ardent and glowing; yet their means were limited, their prejudices numerous and next to insuperable, and the barriers in the way of their aggressive movement appalling; and every thing had to be wrought out from a germinant principle, by a painful experience of labour, prayer, enterprise, opposition, and martyrdom. How insignificant and unpromising were appearances at the death of our Lord; nay, even at the period of his ascension, and afterwards, when his church stood before the world as a distinct body! But even in their feeblest state, we find the Apostles going "*forth, and preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*" (Mark xvi. 20.) At this early date, as might be expected from our Lord's predictions,

many things of a most unpromising nature, as to outward events, contributed to the success of the first plantation of the church. Amongst these must be classed impulses of the blessed Spirit—interpositions of Providence—facilities for aggression from the then state of the world—and not unfrequently persecution and opposition. We perceive all these elements powerfully contributing their several amounts of influence and impetus, to impel the church forward in her course of evangelical labour and success. Hence, at the time of Stephen's martyrdom, "*there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.*" (Acts viii. 1, 3—5, 14—17, 25.) This is the first account we have of the disciples moving beyond the limits of Jerusalem. It developes the principle of aggression as an element in the first church; but it is only brought out in combination with persecution, the scattering of the flock of Christ, and the preaching of Philip, one of the Deacons,—or, as he would now be called, "a layman." In these early times the burden of prophesying, teaching, or preaching, lay on the conscience of every disciple. All the Lord's people were Prophets, in the sense of being his witnesses amongst men.

St. Peter was gone to Joppa, when he was called to open the Gospel kingdom to the Gentiles in the family of Cornelius, then residing at Cæsarea. Two miraculous agencies were employed to accomplish this;—an angel was sent to Cornelius, and a vision was granted to Peter. The issue was the introduction of the truth to the family of a devout Gentile, and the beginning of the work of conversion among that numerous branch of the human family. This event excited the prejudices of the Jewish converts. "*And the Apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter*

rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them." The result was:—"*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*" (Acts xi. 1—4, 18.) Here then, again, the kingdom of God was planted in connexion with the church at Jerusalem; and we find that the "*brethren,*" as well as the Apostles, felt that an explanation was due to them from Peter, on account of the novelty introduced into the system by his eating with the "*uncircumcised,*" and preaching the Gospel to them. Peter gave it; and not only were the murmurs of the brethren silenced, but their language was altogether changed, and they "*glorified God.*" The whole of this transaction shows, that the church at Jerusalem was led by the providence of God, the calls of his Spirit, and the impulses of faith and duty, to consider their communion as a concentration of power given them only for the purposes of extension and enlargement.

Antioch became one of these central posts. The account of the introduction of the Gospel to this celebrated pagan city, where the disciples were first called CHRISTIANS, is very instructive. It is said, "*Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the* GRECIANS, *preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*" (Acts xi. 19—21.) This place seems soon to have become a parent church, and to have sent out its ambassadors to the regions around. In the next chapter but one it is said, "*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain Prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*" (Acts xiii. 1—4.) The narrative then goes on to give an account of the ministerial career of these Apostles to the Gentiles, and especially that of St. Paul. After preaching in various places, and founding numerous societies, it is said at the close, on their return, "*And thence*" (from Attalia) "*they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith*

unto the Gentiles." (Acts xiv. 26, 27.) Besides the mission from this place to Jerusalem, on the subject of circumcision and the obligation of the believers to keep the law of Moses, St. Paul and his companion went forth from this city, on two other occasions, to fulfil their evangelical mission to the world. (See Acts xv. 36—40; xviii. 22, 23.)

These cases are sufficient to indicate the principle on which we are insisting; namely, that the apostolical churches admitted the obligation of our Lord's injunction to "*preach the Gospel to every creature,*" and acted upon it. No doubt all the principal places were centres of an aggressive operation; and when they became more settled than they appear in their infant state, and had their Bishops, Elders, or Angels, to preside over them, still Evangelists were employed to preach in the adjacent country, and proclaim the truth where Christ had not been named.

When, it may be inquired, does this obligation cease? The answer is, Never, so long as the world continues in an unevangelized state. The commission belongs to the dispensation. It is not an accident of time and place, to be attended to as taste, inclination, or convenience may dictate. The duty of a church of Christ to make its concentration, union, grace, gifts, and power, the foundation of an onward movement, is essential to the state itself. Moral obligation is uniform. This is of the nature of an immutable, moral, or rather divine, obligation, because it rests on the command of our Lord, and is inherent in Christianity. In case a Christian church could succeed in planting the truth in one region, and giving a rich and plentiful supply of the means of grace, duty would not terminate there. The "*regions beyond*" would still require to be blessed with the same visions of light and pastures of grace. In the instances referred to above, geographical and national demarcations are not at all regarded. Every new footing gained is only made an occasion of an advance; till, in the course of a comparatively short time, by the united labours of all, the Gospel was preached in the greater part of the civilized world.

Now this we consider the practical developement of the understanding of the Apostles and disciples respecting the purport of our Lord's commission. The fact, that the most remote period—as far back as antiquity in its remains and history conducts us—shows that *some form* of the Episcopal government existed, is taken—and not without reason—as a presumptive, if not an absolutely conclusive, proof of the existence of that *regime* from the beginning. Hence Episcopal churches are deemed apostolical on this ground. The argument may be good as far as it goes. But something more is necessary. If these churches cease to perform apostolical service, and, besides conserving the truth amongst themselves, neglect to extend it to others, even to the ends of the earth;

they may retain the name, but they fail in preserving the spirit, and even, properly speaking, the government of a church: they drop the commission of our Lord, and cease to be in doctrine, as far as this is concerned, as well as in practice, what our Lord taught as essential to the characteristics of his true followers, and as entitling them to the promise, "*Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And, on the other hand, those communities which are acting on this divine commission, possess the marks of having received the mantle of the Apostles, whatever may be their name.

3. The connexion of the primitive societies of Christians for mutual support and strength, and, through this, their beneficial influence on the world, indicate the principle we are considering; namely, that a church must be evangelizing in its labours in order to be apostolical.

The recommendatory letters of the Apostles, and various incidents mentioned in the New Testament, show, that the *communion* of the primitive church was general, and that a person who was a member of this general body would be received, as such, by every local society throughout the world. By this means, an interest for the common good was produced; and the affectionate zeal of the disciples, instead of being limited to some narrow bounds, and sectarian objects, embraced the whole community in every place. This stood intimately connected with the progress of Christianity. The body, being one, became strong and vigorous; the young scions and offshoots which extended themselves, were supported by the parent tree; the more distant and feeble portions of the general community received counsel, succour, and aid from the more mature and advanced; and the poor and persecuted were aided by the pecuniary contributions, and messages of condolence and sympathy, of those who were placed in better circumstances. Thus, an intercommunion being constantly kept up, life circulated rapidly through the veins of the whole body, stimulus was furnished, and a high tone of activity ensued.

This was not only beneficial to the church, as such, but it eminently fitted it to advance in its career of usefulness. Every member, in spirit and heart, was, what in modern phrase would be called, a Missionary. Feeling an interest in the whole state of Christianity, his thoughts and affections would take this specific mould, because its prosperity, in his views and notions, would not consist in mere peace, or even purity, but in progress. And by being trained in the love of the united church in every place, he would be eminently fitted to contribute his portion of aid, in every possible way, for its enlargement.

Hence we find directions of a practical nature, on points of duty, together with censure or approval, as the respective societies had acted aright or negligently in these matters. We find a lengthened

discourse on these points in the eighth and subsequent chapters of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "*Moreover, brethren,*" he says, "*we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.....Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.....For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.....For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.....For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whilst by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.....But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when* YOUR FAITH IS INCREASED, THAT WE SHALL BE ENLARGED BY YOU ACCORDING TO OUR RULE ABUNDANTLY, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE REGIONS BEYOND YOU, *and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.*" (2 Cor. viii. 1—5, 7, 12—15; ix. 1, 2, 12—15; x. 13—16.)

In these passages, with their context, we have the whole case of the primitive churches, as far as the principle under review is concerned. But from the latter portion of the extract it is evident, that the sympathy, bounty, gift, grace, mutual relief and succour, referred to

throughout, was to become an occasion for the Apostles and teachers "*to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond.*"

From all this it seems, that the very religion of the primitive churches embraced this duty. The individual members would not have been considered Christians, had they not embodied in their faith and feelings a zealous concern for the extension and triumph of the Gospel; and the communities of believers would not have been recognised as parts of the body of Christ, had they not manifested a united affection towards other parts of the family of God, and contributed their proportion of exertion towards the multiplication of its numbers, by the conversion of the Gentile world around.

4. The promise of increase, up to the point of universality, indicates the aggressive nature of the means to be employed by the church.

The doctrines and promises of the new covenant were held in their obvious meaning by the primitive disciples. Catholicity with them was not an unmeaning abstraction. Though they did not employ the word, yet they held the doctrine, of universality in a most important sense. In the Christian theology, God is represented as *universal* in his love, his grace, his authority, and in the designs of his counsels. The Saviour is spoken of as *universal* in his redemption and salvation, in his mediatorial functions and power, and in the message of his Gospel. The Holy Ghost is exhibited as *universal* in his light, his influence, and power, and in his various offices as a Witness, Comforter, and Sanctifier. The church is described as *universal* in its foundations, and in its provisions and rights. On this covenant-fulness of truth and grace, the Apostles proceeded to build a really *universal fabric;* and had not their successors narrowed the dispensation by their doctrinal speculations and ecclesiastical systems, this noble design would, long ago, have been carried out into practical and beautiful effect. It is difficult to imagine how the doctrines of the Gospel can be truly and consistently held otherwise than in their sublime catholicity. We instance, more particularly, in that of the atonement. It is stated, "*By the grace of God*" Christ "*tasted death for every man.*" (Heb. ii. 9.) Our Lord said, "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*" (John xii. 32.) And again: "*Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47.) Then, it may be inquired, How can this doctrine be maintained in its legitimate meaning, unless it is so placed in the polity of the church as to make it the ground of a universal movement amongst the destitute nations of the earth, and the offer of salvation to all men? The apostolic doctrine on this, and on all other subjects, was so understood as to

become the ground-plan of their labours and exertions, on the scale of the truth itself. In virtue of this, the *church-principles* which they were divinely taught to adopt, were made the rule of preaching, as extensively as the population of the world. Christianity was not with them the symbol of a party, and the watch-word of a sect. It was a great, a grand, a sublime truth, applicable to all times, to all places, and to all men. It spurned the limitations of the Jewish dispensation; it broke down "*the middle wall of partition*" between them and the Gentiles; it shone forth as the sun, alike "*on the evil and on the good;*" and enthroned the Messiah as the anointed and the universal King.

II. NOW THE QUESTION PRESENTS ITSELF, AT THIS POINT OF OUR PROGRESS, DOES THE THEORY OF OUR CHURCH-SYSTEM HARMONIZE WITH THIS PRIMITIVE MODEL, AND DO WE ACT UPON IT?

The true question for consideration is, whether we are Missionary in spirit and in practice. We unhesitatingly say, that we are so in an eminent degree; that, in fact, if we have any marked and striking peculiarity, it is this; and if, above all things, we may glory in—or rather *magnify*—the grace of God manifested to us, it must be on this ground in particular. From the beginning, our community has been led into this branch of usefulness, from a deep conviction that good men were bound to care for the conversion of the ungodly. This has ever been the ardent and common feeling of all. The enlarged state of the work, no doubt, originated in the impression of the first converts, that it was their duty to seek the salvation of all the lost sons of Adam.

Every society became a nucleus of religious light and power in its own immediate locality; whilst the more active heralds of the cross flew, as on the wings of the morning, to proclaim the Saviour's love to the largest possible extent. These societies were germinant. Working from their feeble centre, they gained new converts imbued with their own feelings; and the accessions they gained increased their strength. We find the *spirit* and *principle* of the enlarged operation in the very beginning, and in the universally-recognised doctrines and rules of the entire body. The Missionary enterprise, and the duties it involves, are not, with us, of the nature of a new appendage,—a young scion engrafted on an old stock; but the root and primary principle of the church-state itself. It is instructive to trace the operation of this well-understood and universally-admitted obligation among the infant societies at home. Those united bodies considered themselves a sort of Missionary church to the several neighbourhoods around them. By preaching, exhortation, reading sermons, the institution of prayer-meetings, and personal visitations to the habitations of those to

whom they could gain access, they sought to introduce the spirit of fervent piety, to seek the most degraded, to bring them to Christ, and lead them to a present salvation. Their means were limited, their station low, their abilities often humble and unpretending; but the issue shows that piety is power, and united exertions, on a systematic plan, will in the end bring about great results.

These societies were, in the beginning, isolated bodies, often at a great distance from each other, and held no intercourse except through the visits of the Messrs. Wesley, and experimental letters which, in those times, were constantly sent in interchange from one place to another. But then the principle of oneness was acknowledged. They were UNITED SOCIETIES, stimulated by one spirit, and aiming at one object. In proportion as the work advanced, the chasms between the different parts of the community were filled up, and the distance lessened, till they came to meet as one widely-extended whole. And, moreover, that spirit of enterprise which grew up with the little and feeble societies, is now seen to imbue one great system; just as the streams from the mountain-side fall into the ocean, and become a part of its mighty waters. Hence the evangelical feelings and aggressive action of the body, as displayed at present on the distant fields of the world, are the concentration of the separate waters of the diminutive fountains which flowed from the local societies, to irrigate this country in the first instance, but are now so deep as to send their streams into many of the pagan nations. The faith on which the Missionary enterprise rests; the love of God and man which is its stimulus; and the habit of sacrifice, zeal, and pecuniary assistance which it calls forth; grew up with the religious state of the people from the beginning. There was no need, when the time for the enlarged movement came, to look abroad for precedents, encouragement, motives, and light to guide them, as in a dark, doubtful, and untrodden path. They possessed all this amongst themselves. It constituted an element of their piety; it belonged to their creed; it entered into their sentiments; it was the subject of their daily prayers; it was one mode of the expression of their Christian love; it formed a part of all their notions of the church-state, and the obligations which it involves.

That the evangelizing spirit and character of our church is no accident, but indigenous, of home-growth, and properly *the system of Methodism* itself, must now be shown.

1. Our theology embodies the principle, that Christianity is a universal remedy for the sin and guilt of the world.

The visible state and movements of a community, both as regards its individual members and its corporate character, must depend on its doctrines, unless they merely exist as a dead letter. But the fact is, doctrine never does so exist. If the truth is held by a church, and

exhibited in her creeds, and yet is not taught and made the groundwork of the living spirit, experience, and habits of the people, the doctrine which supersedes it must influence those who fall under its power. The sentiments which form the character of, and, indeed, govern, mankind, are not innate, but objective. Truth is of this nature; and one of the offices of faith is to transfer it to the mind, so as to cause it to become the rule of action, and lead to habits of religion.

The peculiar characteristics of our system, in the point under consideration, are therefore to be traced to the teaching we have enjoyed from the beginning. The doctrine of God's universal grace, and its affiliated truths, were not exhibited on the battle-field of opposing parties, so long and so strenuously, as a matter of curious speculation, but as lying at the very foundation of that great evangelical movement which was then in its commencement. It must be evident, that the doctrines of universal redemption are, to say the least, more calculated to inspire a spirit of enterprise, and lead to exertions to extend the Gospel on a large scale, than the opposite tenets. We grant, indeed, that this effusion of charitable zeal does not *necessarily* flow from an adherence to this system of doctrine, or that the more restricted notions entertained by others *necessarily* lead to a limited and narrow scale of evangelical labour. We speak now of the *tendency* of a form of truth; and think that those views which embrace the universality of the provisions of the Gospel are more calculated to excite to evangelical exertions, on an extended platform, than those which limit the counsels of God.

With this remark, on the question of *tendencies*, it is proper to add, that, in point of fact, many of those who have held the highest doctrinal sentiments respecting the extent of the love and designs of God, in the mission and death of Christ, have practically worked much within the bounds of their own theoretic circumference; whilst, on the other hand, many of those who hold particular redemption, with its collateral doctrines, go infinitely beyond their creed in pious efforts to save a lost and ruined race. In the one case, we have religious feeling and zeal operating above and beyond the theoretic line marked out; and in the other, we have these qualities shrinking much within the limits of an admitted rule of truth and duty. But though this may be the fact as regards parties exposed to all the deteriorating influences of human infirmity, it must be obvious that the admitted principle, that an atonement was made for all men, and therefore that all men may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, is much more likely to lead to large and unembarrassed labours to bring them to Christ, than the old, stern doctrine, that, by an irresistible decree, these benefits were only designed for a few.

It must, however, be granted, that, by almost all parties holding

the doctrine of general redemption, from the time of Arminius—who is perfectly evangelical himself—to the rise of Methodism, notions were usually associated with the subject which tended to neutralize the effect of that truth as an instrument of evangelical exertion. We instance in one point only,—the opinions entertained on the sufficiency of what is technically called natural religion. On the ground of this imagined sufficiency, heathen virtue, if sincerely cultivated, was often represented as being as good and acceptable before God as Christian faith. On this principle general redemption was not considered as a provision for universal faith, grace, conversion, and holiness, —in a word, of a universal Christianity; but a sort of *medium* through which every thing else might be equally pleasing to God. The Christian sacrifice, and the Mediator's throne, on this theory, were supposed to gain access to God for the worship of Pagans, Jews, Mahommedans, and Papist idolaters, equally and in common with the humble believers in these great verities.

In consequence of these loose and erroneous notions, generally held in connexion with this important doctrine, it failed to produce any such result as we now contemplate, till it was adopted by Mr. Wesley, and made the foundation of his system of evangelical toil. Hence its usefulness, in connexion with efforts to enlarge the kingdom of God, must depend on the manner in which it is held, and the other truths which, as satellites, revolve around it.

We believe that, in this, as in many other matters, Methodism has wrought a most beneficial change even in our systems of theology. For a long course of time it was thought by controversialists, that the doctrine of universal redemption could not be held consistently with a thorough and perfectly evangelical creed; that, for instance, the entire fall and depravity of man, salvation by grace, justification by faith only, the sanctification of the soul through the Spirit, and this doctrine, could not exist in harmony with each other. This opinion has been shown to be ill-founded: it is now seen that these truths can coexist; that a purely evangelical system, founded on this theory, is in perfect unity with itself, and in agreement with holy Scripture; and that a church, in its services, communion, polity, and entire plan and scheme of evangelical operations, can be made safely and permanently to rest on this great principle, this fundamental truth.

On the other hand, we perceive, in modern times, a very great revolution in the Calvinistic theology. The universality of the atonement is generally admitted; and, as the admission of one truth must necessarily draw others after it, it is held to be the duty of Ministers to make a general offer of salvation to their flocks, together with the obligation of churches to seek the conversion of all mankind. This is very important; and, no doubt, stands intimately connected with

the highly praiseworthy exertions we now witness amongst different bodies of Christians holding these opinions. From all this it is evident, that the theological systems of Christian bodies must be taken as the inspiring cause, the living spirit, and the impelling power of their evangelical labours,—in conjunction, of course, with a true faith on the part of the people, and the effusions of the Holy Ghost. By this rule, it is easy to trace the spring of the Missionary feeling, which we behold in our own church-system, to our theology. In addition to the one leading doctrine already mentioned, it will illustrate this, if we point out two or three particulars in connexion with our entire creed.

(1.) One of these particulars is, that our doctrinal system assumes, as a leading principle, that Christianity is not of the nature of an abstraction, made known for the mental amusement and pleasure of mankind, but that it is given for USE.

This, if we mistake not, will furnish a key to all the writings of Mr. Wesley; and especially to the standards which he prepared for the instruction and guidance of his people. In his hand every truth is practical; it has a direct bearing on the state of mankind; it is connected with some privilege or duty; and its USE is plainly pointed out. We have no curious speculations on the divine essence, counsels, providence; but a clear, full, and intelligible exhibition of all that is revealed of the Godhead, but especially in relation to the salvation of man. His great love, the freeness of his grace, his readiness to forgive, the manner in which he makes himself known to the believing heart, his indwelling life and power, and the liberty of access he grants in prayer and communion, are all points which are dwelt upon in the fullest and plainest manner. The imagination is not taught to revel in ecstasies, amid the glories of a fancied deity; but the whole heart is led to bow in humble adoration at the footstool of the divine Majesty, to learn his will, to feel his power, to taste his love. The same is the case with the doctrine of atonement, of the Holy Spirit's influence, and of all the promises and duties of the Christian covenant; the USE of these great provisions of Christianity is constantly pointed out. But it is to that branch of theology which is connected with the personal enjoyments, hopes, and duties of the people of God, that we are to look for the most perfect exhibition of this principle. Every privilege is constituted the element, the power, the motive of active piety—the inspiring spirit of the religious life. The foundation of all useful or good works is laid in the blessings of the grace of God; but then this grace can never exist in the heart without bringing every faculty, gift, distinction, and opportunity under requisition to the glory of God. Never did a system of teaching more lucidly, powerfully, and with more uncompromising fidelity, enforce the practical duties of religion, than that of our venerable Founder. He insisted on faith; but it was

a faith producing good works. He taught the doctrine of the "witness of the Spirit;" but he added that of "the witness of our own spirit," or the testimony of our conscience, as a corroborative evidence of adoption. He unequivocally made known the necessity of the new birth; but he clothed his "*new creation*" in the beautiful verdure of living fruit. He could not imagine any thing more certain than that the love of God is an experimental blessing; but he insisted that it was the principle of all practical holiness. Besides this, all the details of duty are gone into with a minuteness and force of application which admit of no evasion—no escape.

Now this is intimately connected with the point in hand. In illustration of this, we may mention the steadiness of our people in practical usefulness, in the midst of the ever-shifting temptations to an eccentric course. How often is it seen, that the finest minds, possessed of the most unquestioned and indeed ardent piety, are diverted from a career of evangelical labour by the origination of some floating fancies of the moment! How much intellect, learning, feeling, zeal, vehement debate, —expenditure of time, influence, and even property, have we witnessed in a single generation, on questions which have no practical bearing on the extension of the Gospel, and the salvation of the world! The true exposition of prophecy; the second coming of Christ, and his personal reign on earth; the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, in their national character; the raptures, frenzy, and strange tongues of Irvingism;—and now, and above all, the concentration of an infinite amount of research, talent, writing, and labour, on the question of a mere external church-polity; are subjects which have engrossed as much energy, and dissipated as much religion of the heart, as might, under the blessing of God, have converted half the continent of India. To revel in these luxuriant speculations is, no doubt, very agreeable to, and much more in accordance with, poetic taste, and the ambition for learned fame, than the drudgery of doing good.

By the divine blessing, we have been saved from all this. We deny not the probability that our want of leisure, our limited means of gratification in some of these mental amusements, and our position amongst the tribes of Israel, may have contributed their amount of preventing influence, in guarding us against approaching these *Serbonian bogs* in which some of the finest geniuses have been engulfed. But we attribute our preservation chiefly to two safeguards amongst ourselves,—the practical nature of our doctrinal system, and our active employment. The first has fixed a principle of religious zeal and activity in the minds of the people; and by keeping before their attention the obligation to devote their energies and means to really useful purposes, they are secured from the temptations of an idle and speculative piety. In times of religious excitement, if the

energies of the moving body cannot be directed to practical objects, they will necessarily take an eccentric course, and dash into collision with some opposing body,—or be dissipated in the infinitude of abstract error. To be preserved in the sober habit of serving God, doing good, endeavouring to extend religion, and of exemplifying the steadiness of experimental piety, is a blessing next in value to its enjoyment.

Our very existence would have long since ceased, had we not been kept, by the mercy of God, from the extravagant errors to which reference has been made. It is only by the husbandry of our strength and resources, and their steady direction to strictly religious objects, that we have been able to accomplish so much. Let this be continued as the living illustration of the spirit, teaching, and tendency of our theology, and it will, in the end, be seen, that the regular concentration of means, which appear to be insignificant, can, in their united force, accomplish great results.

(2.) Another leading principle of this doctrinal system is, that the Gospel, in itself, is a sufficient and sovereign remedy for the sins and miseries of "all sorts and conditions of men."

Believing that all men are included in the merciful provisions of the "*covenant of promise*," it follows, that no decretal curse—no preterition—no interdict of exclusion from the Gospel of Christ—rests against any rank, any social condition—any physical, mental, or moral degradation of the human race; and that man's nature and evil propensities, being essentially the same in all ages and places, can present no barrier against the saving power of the Gospel. Man, thus considered, under the aspects of the covenant of grace, becomes a very different creature from what he appears in his actual condition. Antecedently, and before any exertions are made for his instruction, and recovery to piety and to God, he is seen, through this medium, in a potential state of religion,—capable of being clothed in the attributes of wisdom, love, and holiness. The ground-work of all this is laid in the counsels of God, as unfolded in the beautiful imagery, predictions, and promises of the Prophets, and secured by the mediatorial grace and power of Messiah. No faith in the success of the truth can go beyond the limits of the love, the designs, and the mercy of God; no exertions can be unwarranted, uncovenanted, or stretch farther than the merits of the Saviour's cross on the one hand, or of the religious capacities of the human race on the other. Where there is mind, there are the elements on which the light and influence of the Gospel may successfully operate; there is a jewel which may be polished, however rough and deeply embedded in the rubbish of idolatry and sin; an angel form, though fallen, that may have its wings trimmed and plumed for an heavenward flight. Though human nature is, of itself, entirely "*alienated from the life of God through*

the ignorance that is in us," and by the *"inventions"* of men in their religious wanderings and errors, as well as by their social expedients and vices, ten thousand adventitious evils have been heaped on the original depravity; yet there lies beneath these ruins an indestructible immateriality; and where there is soul, there may be virtue and religion.

These are the views taught by the lessons of the Gospel. How different from those which are furnished by a merely economical science! Classified in these estimates of his capacity, man is only considered in reference to his rank in the scale of social life; his ability to wield the weapons of war; his aptitude to take his share in the manufactures and trade of the world; and his qualifications to add to, or to deduct from, the stock of temporal enjoyment. These are the questions discussed and considered in all merely human policy, respecting a creature who was formed in the image of God, and who still retains his immortality. The distinction between these two systems, in their respective estimate of the family of man, is infinitely in favour of Christianity.

The destinies of the world, when considered as the field of this mighty spiritual operation, appear truly sublime. The universal establishment of the kingdom of God; the reign of religious peace, happiness, and purity; the celebration of divine worship in confidence, praise, and love; the full tide of divine influence happily possessed, not transiently, but, as a perennial blessing, ever flowing; and then the redemption of Christ enjoyed by the believing multitude, whilst *"every knee bows to him,"* and *"every tongue confesses that he is Lord;"*—is a noble and an animating picture. This, and much more, we are assured, shall take place. God *"shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets since the world began."* (Acts iii. 20, 21.)

These are the sentiments which our theology embodies. We know of no doubt ever entertained amongst us, of the practicability of reaching the highest point of advancement by the power of the Gospel alone. Without this conviction, how forbidding must the regions to be occupied appear! In one place a well-organized Paganism presents itself to view, supported by an antiquated literature and reputed sacred writings; an education founded on these errors; a social and domestic state agreeing to the pollutions of the system; a worship splendid and gorgeous, embracing the adoration of an entire pantheon of idols;—all stand in array to dispute every attempt by the Minister of the cross to turn the people to Christ. In another region, humanity seems stripped of all its distinctions, and man appears more like a mere brute than the possessor of intelligent and immortal powers. Ignorant of the first principles of truth, savage and

fierce, migratory in his habits, destitute of the most common notions of morality, a stranger to every idea of religion, he is the mere creature of his passions, the sport of every brutal vice, and distinguished only from the prowling animals around, by his capacity to exceed them in ferocity. In other parts of the earth, the people are in slavery: a condition which, of itself, sufficiently indicates the low and sad state of their mental and moral degradation; for when was it ever found that civilized and religious man was long held in bondage? The obstacles here are twofold,—the miserable ignorance and sin of the poor people themselves, and the interested opposition of their masters. These have been felt and encountered at every advance. Considered by themselves, these difficulties appear insuperable, and, in fact, would have led men—before the attempt in modern times was made to convert them to Christianity—to consider it not only as hopeless, but as the sign of religious madness. But true faith looks upon nothing as impossible which is warranted by the word of God. Relying simply and entirely on the efficiency of the Gospel, these appalling difficulties have all been successfully encountered.

The primary basis for this confidence—next to that of the Bible—is laid in our theological system. It has imbued the whole ministry, and indeed all the people, with a full and unwavering persuasion that success is practicable in the most difficult regions, and to an unlimited extent. It has made the whole body evangelical in its spirit, and induced a conviction,—amounting in authority and force to an article of faith,—that this feeling, and these corresponding exertions, are essential characteristics of a true church of Christ. In addition to this, it has led to an anxious desire, and, we hope, to constant prayers, for perpetual and increased progress; and, withal, to a settled judgment, that the retained commission of Christ, and the promised blessing and influence of the Holy Spirit, must be indicated by the advancement of the church, and the conversion of men to God.

(3.) Again: our theology teaches that all men are not only invited and permitted, but enjoined and commanded, to believe and embrace the truth.

It re-iterates the command of Christ: "*Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.*" (Matt. xxii. 9.) It announces the doctrine of St. Paul: "*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. x. 12—15, 17.) But, more: this theology teaches us, that it is not

only the duty of the church to make the Gospel known, but also that it is the duty of all men to believe, in order that they may be saved; that in fact it is "*made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*" (Rom. xvi. 26.)

On these principles two great duties are laid upon the parties referred to, namely, the church and the world; and these are essentially connected with each other. To the church belongs the responsible task of making the way of salvation known to the pagan and every other portion of the benighted world. This is appointed, commanded, and is the established order of the Christian economy. To suppose that the heathen nations may attain religion without the truth and ordinances of the Gospel, is either to imagine a new miraculous dispensation to be at work, independent of the Christian economy; or that the faculties of the human mind are in themselves sufficient to acquire its knowledge and perform its duties. Both these positions are nullified by plain, indubitable facts. We have no series of moral miracles at work among the heathen nations, by which they are led to rise from their degradation; and it never happens that their own powers are found sufficient to elevate them.

Hence the true and saving power of the Christian dispensation is found to be limited to itself. We find none of the wisdom, spiritual life, religious happiness, holiness, habits of worship and adoration, presented to the true God,—and public and private virtues such as are taught by the holy Scriptures,—beyond the limits of actual Christianity in its authorized means. The Gospel institute is, in some sense, a living, standing, perpetual miracle. It is so, inasmuch as it is a dispensation rising above nature, in opposition to its moral tendencies and positive state; and because it is a *medium* through which God directly works, producing results of holiness and happiness beyond all her means to accomplish. Now, it is the duty of the church, by her Ministers, to establish the *medium* in question, by giving the holy Scriptures, by preaching the Gospel, and by introducing the ordinances of God's house. We know not the reasons for the appointment; but we find, in fact, that the matter so stands in the final settlement of the kingdom of God on earth, and is taught in the last discourses of our Lord with his disciples; that the Apostles, and of consequence those who are really their successors, should be his "*witnesses*" to the ends of the earth, and that it belonged to them "*to disciple all nations.*" (Luke xxiv. 48; Matt. xxviii. 19.)

This undoubtedly places Christian bodies in an awful position of responsibility; and it supposes, in some sense, though not absolutely, that they possess the power of self-progression. We limit this remark to the extension of the truth and means of religion. This belongs to the church; this she has the power of accomplishing. When this is done, the Holy Spirit operates through the truth and ordinances thus

established, so as to render both effectual in the conversion of mankind. Facts come in to support this statement. Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in its real nature, we find more or less of saving grace manifested; and, on the other hand, where this blessing is not possessed at all, or, being once enjoyed, is perverted, no such effects are ever found to exist.

But with duty on the side of the church, we find obligation also on the side of those who are visited with the grace of the Christian dispensation. There has been an infinite expenditure of polemic strength on the questions of God's providence, decrees, spiritual influence, and divine grace, on the one side; and on the freedom or bondage of the will, and its cognate doctrines, on the other; together with the accountability, salvability, and final destiny of the Heathen. However these subjects may be settled, one thing is plain; namely, that it is our duty to make the Gospel known to them, and it is equally theirs to embrace it, when so made known. There are no contradictions in truth; and the command to make known the Gospel is proof of a corresponding design that it should be believed, enjoyed, and obeyed.

So teaches our theology. It is bright as the morning light; it clears away the mists of many generations; the dark decrees of the fatalists; the mystic jargon of the metaphysicians; the cold and crabbed dogmas of the Schoolmen; the anti-evangelical sentiments of the legalists; and the erroneous assumptions of the systematic divinity; but, in addition, it places the open door of salvation before all men. It is the theology of the holy Scriptures, in the language of common sense. It has driven back the bolt which locked up the destinies of the world; and has thrown open a wide and effectual door of usefulness to the Gentile nations. Whatever measure of influence the Methodist doctrine, as a whole, has had on other churches, (and those who know the history of Whitefield, as well as that of our own Founder, will not think it trivial,) we are assured that our own energetic movements in the direction of the heathen world, are owing to the truth which has been taught among us from the beginning.

(4.) But, finally, this system of doctrine makes it essential that the blessings of the Gospel should be really enjoyed.

We have no puerile sentimentality, no frenzied ecstasies, no revelling of the imagination, no self-created Elysium, no unmeaning austerities and voluntary humility, no "CATHOLIC LONGINGS,"—as the new school call their restless desires for the superstitions of Rome; no, none of these are put in the place of a direct faith and conversion. In this system all is real. The blessings of the Gospel are represented as free, full, and universal; but then every man must personally possess them, or they can furnish him only with a very secondary benefit. To instruct men in the knowledge of their wants

and dangers, and then to press upon them the glorious privileges of salvation, and lead them forward to the highest attainments in knowledge, holiness, and joy, is the office of our entire theology.

But the point stated in the above proposition, by implication, supposes the danger and peril of all those who are destitute of the grace of God, as manifested in the Gospel economy. This is the most moving fact to be found in the whole series of revealed verities, which can be brought before the attention of serious and reflecting men. However abstract theories may be disposed of, respecting the possible salvation of men who are placed, by inevitable circumstances, under the dominion of Paganism, or other forms of superstition, it is a settled law of God, that sin must be pardoned or punished, and that "*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" (Heb. xii. 14.) The entire aggregation of moral evil, found in the human heart, may exist in different combinations in this world; but the issue will be the same,—eternal banishment from God. The external colouring of these evils will differ, as men are found in varied positions in the world. But it is of trifling importance, whether sinners are lost in the midst of the light of the Gospel, or in the darkness of some false and erroneous system. Sin, persisted in, under all its aspects and in all places, must lead to the same ruin.

But how awful a light does this truth throw on the state of the great human family, and on the duties of the church! We look on the frivolities of mankind; their devotion to the world,—pleasure, passion, appetite; and are little moved. Their inattention to the services of religion, and to the duty of seeking God, is as little regarded by us. We speculate on the injuries, oppressions, falsehoods, and superstitions of Popery; on the amazing power once possessed and exercised by the false prophet Mahomet; on the foolish, bewildering, and brutalizing effects of idolatry; and the matter too often ends in either mere astonishment or pity. But the evils and miseries of these systems lie much deeper. The external developement is only the type of their several forms of sin. They are only the colours hung out to indicate the mode by which God is renounced in his authority and love, true religion neglected, spurned, or at least not acknowledged, and as furnishing the battle-field on which a perpetual contest against the truth, and the means and motives to piety, may be carried on.

The only way of arriving at a right perception on this point is to isolate man from the system by which he is deluded; to consider him in his own individual depravity and guilt; and then to ask, Is he fit for the kingdom of heaven? Pity may induce unreal hope, a false charity lead to excuses and compromises, and indolence to inattention; but the word of God proclaims, as with the sound of thunder, "*Except they repent, they shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke xiii. 3, 5.)

This is the real case to be considered by the church, in estimating

her duties. The increase of a party, as such, is a low, not to say, a despicable, motive; but the conversion of sinners to God is one of the most noble and exciting which can be entertained. Nothing but scriptural views on the dangers of mankind can keep either Christian Ministers, or the people, up to the level of their obligations. Without this, there can be no love corresponding with the miseries, wants, and dangers of a lost world; and then the absence of this principle must lead to indifference. The apprehension of the whole truth on this point is both difficult and painful; but without it, zeal will degenerate into partisanship, and while the peculiarities of the favoured system are supported, the world will be left unpitied in its sins.

The feeling of which we here speak is peculiarly and exclusively religious. It is in some sense—in a low degree—the imitation of the love of God in the gift of his Son, and of the mercy of redemption; it is the imbibing and exhibiting the spirit of the whole Gospel. The means employed to save man supposes a vivid, intense, and infinite perception of danger. The blessed Being who provided our rescue at so costly a price, must have beheld the misery and peril of our condition as a catastrophe of surpassing magnitude and solemnity. None but those who enter into the magnificence of this design, partake of its spirit, and breathe its love, can possibly look with suitable emotions on the dangers of the millions of mankind, living "*without God in the world.*"

This feeling evidently animated our fathers. They considered religion as something positive and essential. With them, no question could be more certainly settled, than that men dying impenitent must perish everlastingly. This sentiment, impressed on the heart, roused their energies, and nerved them to exertion. To "*save a sinner from the error of his ways,*" they felt to be a matter of the highest consequence. Prayers, admonitions, entreaties, self-denying labours were employed, and an exposure to every kind of contumely was willingly undergone, to accomplish this great purpose of their melting charity.

All our united movements originated in the same feeling. Every rule bears the evidence of two leading principles,—the danger and misery of man without religion, and love to the whole race for the Lord's sake. But it is difficult to preserve, in one organized body, constituted of numerous parties, the intensity of feeling, on an admitted truth, which was possessed by the originators of the institutions when formed to embody it. Individual duty, obligation, and even active charity, are often merged in the general stock of feeling and of effort put forth by institutional operations. In this way a vicarious religious tenderness and zeal are imagined, and individual pity, love, and devotedness, are neglected; the conscience participates in the delusion, and that which the institution is doing we take to be done by ourselves. Masses, as such, never think, exercise,

the conscience, or put forth Christian sympathy and zeal. Individuals lead the mind of the multitude, direct its principle, and guide its exertions. Hence the useful and energetic action of a church; its adherence to the truth of God; its enlightened consideration of the wants and dangers of the world; and its evangelical labours, in an institutional form; must depend on the number of thoughtful and sanctified minds which can be brought to take up these subjects, and pour forth the affections of the heart, in prayer and charity, into these channels of exertion. In our own case, as in that of all other Christian communities, it will be found a difficult task to lead forward the heart and efforts of the body in this one evangelical direction. And yet its purity, efficiency, and permanent prosperity depend on this. If we once lose sight of the danger of mankind without the Gospel; of the distinctive nature of conversion, and of its absolute necessity in every man living; of the paramount obligation of Christians to make the salvation of God universally known; and then neglect to take constant measures to carry this into effect; the consequence must be either internal disputation on secondary and trifling questions, or, otherwise, the adoption of "*the form of godliness*," whilst the "*power*" is denied.

2. The institutions and order of our church are conceived in the spirit of its theology, and contemplate a constantly progressive movement.

We instance in the establishment and provisions of this present Conference which I now address. We may be certain that, to a mind constituted like that of our venerable Founder, prescient of almost all the consequences and results of his undertakings, though conceived in the utmost simplicity; and intent on one only object,—the conversion of men to God;—we say, in the case of such a mind, and with such purposes, we may be sure that the establishment of this synodical body would, in design, be connected with the spread of religion. As is well known, it existed in great religious efficiency long before it assumed a legal character. Its legal establishment arose out of its previous organization as an instrument of discipline and evangelical exertion. This latter is, indeed, one of the wisest arrangements which, we believe, ever existed in connexion with a non-established community; embracing the free, and at the same time the definite and tangible, action of a voluntary church,—and yet a church secured in its privileges by statutary provisions.

This function of the Conference is of very high consequence to us in many points of view. It establishes our doctrines with guards and securities of the most stringent description; it secures the vigilant exercise of discipline, defined and limited by well-understood Rules, so that church-order is, with us, the wise and moderate execution of recognised laws, intelligible to all, and agreed upon by united coun-

sels; it provides for the examination, ordination, and commission, given to the candidates for the ministry, on the principle of tests which must bring both duplicity and error to light, if they existed; it meets one of the most difficult questions in church-polity with a certain provision, namely, the perpetuation of an evangelical ministry in our respective places of worship all over the world; and it is found generally to conserve the spirit of unity, affection, zeal, and purity amongst the pastorate itself; whilst it constitutes a recognised and responsible body to which all can look with confidence, as deeply interested in maintaining the scriptural purity and practical efficiency of the whole church. These are points on which very lengthened reflections might be made; but we are now anxious to limit our remarks to the Conference as a centre of evangelical enterprise.

The greatest and most anxious business of this body, in all its details, is, to bring the entire work of God before its supervision in different forms, that measures corresponding to its state may be adopted. At first sight, much that occupies attention might be taken as questions of *mere business*. So the most vital matters connected with the spiritual and truly religious state of churches come to be considered, and their details are undoubtedly so attended to by mere mechanical minds; when, in fact, they originated in the most anxious concern to bring the subject of the work of God in its highest forms under review. Why are the statistics of the body, in the matter of numbers—the erection of chapels—the progress of education—the demand for additional Ministers—the division of Circuits—and the entire progress made in the Missionary field—successively reviewed? These subjects may possibly be attended to in their mere routine; but their design is obviously much higher. The intention is to bring the various departments of the work of God before the serious attention of the assembly, not so much as a legislative body, as a general, incorporated superintendency, acting in a paternal spirit for the common good, that such measures may be taken as the several cases may require. Hence the highest function of this Assembly is, in the right sense of the expression, EPISCOPAL ("overseeing"); and another is *evangelical*, —taking measures for the spread of the Gospel. It follows that, in its administrative character, this assembly of Ministers ought to be regarded as a central power, and its decisions must, of necessity, from the extensive existence of the societies, have a wide range, and produce deep and permanent effects. The moral and religious spirit possessed and exemplified, together with the arrangements and legislation of each one of these assemblies, in their consequences and effects, must reach to every quarter of the globe, and flow on, in the state and destinies of numerous classes of mankind, to the latest generations. They are not only the nearest portions of the people, and the adjacent societies, that the motions of this body touch, affect, and

influence immediately; but the rippling movement reaches every shore. Then, in one view, the Conference is an assembly of Ministers, convened for evangelical purposes: it is an entire pastorate, met to take measures for the propagation of the faith. This is the greatest and most important office which a united body like this can sustain. Its legislative, disciplinary, and pastoral character is highly onerous, as the well-being of a numerous, affectionate, zealous, and holy people must be affected by the counsels which prevail. But it is in the character of an assembly for the propagation of the faith of Christ, that it appears most identical with the school of the Apostles, and important and imposing in its aspects.

We may illustrate this by facts. It was in this body, in 1769, that the "wants of our American brethren were considered, and the question asked, 'Who is willing to go?' Two of our Preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmoor, made the offer. They were sent, with fifty pounds for the chapel, and twenty pounds for their own expenses." This unaffected question, "Who will go?" the answer from two brethren, "Send us," and the sum of twenty pounds given for the general purposes of their mission, led to the organization of a church which, if not so already, is likely to become the greatest Protestant body in the world. We speak advisedly in this. Taking into account the present numbers and position of the "American Methodist Episcopal Church"—the wide area of the United States—the rapidly-increasing population of the country—the adaptation of their system to meet the wants of a scattered and new population—and, above all, the completeness of their church-order, which is evidently looked upon with affectionate and loyal veneration on the part of the people—we are furnished with moral *data* for the conclusion, that the American Methodist Church must, in the ordinary course of things, become one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, united Protestant body in the world.

It is true, that this Church can only be considered as in its infancy; but the progress already made, and the spirit by which it is animated, unite to indicate the certainty and rapidity of its growth. With thirty-three annual Conferences—nearly one million of church-members—a religious influence extending to about five millions of the population—almost four thousand ordained Ministers—and upwards of seven thousand Local Preachers—besides twenty Colleges, and one University, for the promotion of education on strictly Christian principles, in union with the Church—we say, all these, in connexion with the peculiar character of the country, present an aspect of promise which can leave no doubt on the mind as to the future. These societies extend through the whole Union; the Continent itself is the base of this mighty moral operation; the older and more populous cities yield their portion of pious communicants; but the remote wildernesses, cultivated by the laborious Evangelists of the

cross, are equally fruitful. These young communities are laying the foundation of future events, whether religious or otherwise, of great consequence. It is the seed-time of their existence; and generations unborn, to the latest periods, must reap the harvest. This is the exact position of America at present. Her widely-extended—almost illimitable—territory will be filled with living man; her remaining forests will yield to the aggressions of civilization, and present successive harvests to industrious husbandry; the noble and magnificent rivers which sweep through her territories will bear on their banks an unthought-of population;—in fact, it is easy to see that a country so vast, varied, rich in resources, and capable of every kind of advancement, and occupied withal by the enterprising children of our own country, must advance to a greatness equal to any thing the world ever saw. In this state of incipient being, the first occupants of the soil, as religious teachers, secure a great advantage. This is possessed, not exclusively, yet very extensively, by our American brethren. Led on by their zeal and devotedness to God, they have followed the scattered settlers to their distant abodes; and, in the midst of privations, labours, and difficulties, such as might make the stoutest hearts quail, they have carried the "*glad tidings of great joy*" to these destitute people, and at the same time laid the foundations of that church which we see rising in such beautiful proportions, magnificence, and grandeur. Thus blended with the very elements of society in its young and vigorous pulsations, Methodism will, at least in its forms, expand with the social body. May its doctrines, its spirit, and its experimental features, equally grow!

Well may we look back with interest to the time, when it was inquired in this body, "Who is willing to go?" and when the utmost generosity could only furnish the two Evangelists with twenty pounds for the expenses of this enterprise! Well may we take the caution of the sacred writer, "*Who hath despised the day of small things?*" and admire the parables of our Lord which describe his kingdom as "*leaven,*" and as a "*grain of mustard-seed.*" Blessed be God, we see that the least and most unpromising means can produce the greatest results!

It is a happiness to be able to connect a work so spiritual and divine; so evidently and visibly the work of God; so scriptural and true in its doctrines; so primitive and really apostolic in its church-order and polity; so extended and influential amongst a rapidly-expanding population; so promising as to its future influence upon the state of the general Christianity of the world;—we say, it is pleasing, encouraging, and a cause of thankfulness, that this mighty movement, which stands so intimately connected with this Conference, was guided by the counsels of men—especially of one—of eminent sagacity, faithfulness, and zeal.

Thus from the beginning, this body has been the fountain-head of the evangelical efforts of this branch of the church of Christ. This is a great advantage. Whilst the origination of Missionary Societies amongst many other churches has been altogether an *ab-extra* movement; that is, the isolated impression, scheme, and zealous charity, of individual Christians, who have thus risen above their church-system, and put in motion many of the best institutions of the day; our organization itself, in the highest form, that of the Conference, has been eminently Missionary. Hence, long before the body chose to form a regular Missionary Society, the church, as such, was seen to move in that capacity, and, by the direct acts of its assembled pastorate, to send forth its Evangelists into various parts of the world. It was during this period, and under this state of things, that the North-American colonies of the British crown were visited; the West-Indian islands, together with Sierra-Leone, were brought under cultivation; and the Mission to Ceylon and the East was resolved upon and undertaken by the indefatigable Dr. Coke. Those communities which only give effect to their evangelical convictions and charities through the medium of institutions distinct from their church-organization, claim to have a priority over us in point of time. In the mere formation of distinct societies they are undoubtedly right; but let it be recollected, that the institution of our Missionary Society introduced no new principle amongst us, as was the case amongst them. This Conference, from its commencement, was an evangelizing body on the largest scale; and, as we see, took in and, as far as means would allow, occupied scenes of usefulness, which are rightly deemed fields of purely Missionary enterprise.

3. The spirit and character of our itinerant ministry indicates the aggressive nature of our system.

The evident design of this arrangement is twofold,—the preservation of a lively and vigorous action, by a change of Ministers, amongst the societies already in existence; and then a consideration of the wants of the unconverted. Whatever may be thought respecting the fitness of itinerancy to meet the entire necessities of a settled and regularly-organized church, its establishment and provisional perpetuity, and indeed universality, prove the point we are considering; namely, that our church-system contains, within itself essentially, the element of aggression. Had the Founder of our polity, and those who acted with him, designed that we should become a mere local, limited, and stationary body, they certainly would not have introduced the principle of itinerancy, so as to found the ministry upon it. True to his own impressions and long-continued practice, it seems to have been the fixed resolution of Mr. Wesley, that his followers should never have the temptation of settling down in a limited sphere, in the exercise of isolated pastoral functions, gain

for themselves mere local influence or respect, or surround their ministry by attached admirers! Religion was regarded by him as a great truth, to be as little incorporated with human feelings and tastes as possible, and the Gospel as a remedy complete in itself, and needing none of the adjuncts of conventional honour and influence. Its Ministers are left, by being in constant *transitu*, to the bare and naked power of enunciating the truth, without the adventitious aids of residence, personal influence, the reputation of wisdom, or any of those qualities which recommend a public character to those to whom he ministers. As collected churches need Pastors, more than Evangelists; and as none can become thorough Pastors without residence; and as successful evangelical labours suppose the occupancy of the country, by settled and established societies; it is difficult to conceive on what ground the law of itinerancy was rendered universal and perpetual, except on the principle already named,—that of preserving life in the church, and promoting the evangelization of the world.

The system is admirably fitted for the latter purpose. It seems to impose the necessity of progression. An itinerant ministry, moving only round an orbit already formed, without attempting enlargement, would present an anomalous appearance. We are, as a body, in the position of an army, to which retreat is certain disaster; and, even more, the mere attempt to localize, and, in that sense, to concentrate, our religious and spiritual resources without advancement, would be to us a fearful diminution of strength. Nothing suits the genius of our economy but new enterprise—new conquests—and new fields of evangelical labour—successfully cultivated.

4. The division of our ministerial labour into Circuits indicates the same principle of evangelical aggression.

In the first instance, these were of great extent, embracing not only numerous towns and villages containing a large population, but sometimes entire counties and provinces. They were, of course, only visited very occasionally; but as these spheres of ministerial labour were contracted, the same spirit of enterprise still predominated. The true theory of a Methodist Circuit is that of expansion. The associated ministry is not intended to be circumscribed to the congregations already collected, to tending the sheep already in the fold, and watching over the individuals and families who belong to the church; but to pervade the whole, as means and opportunities present themselves, by not only "going to those who want us, but to those who want us most." This is the primary idea of this division of our work. We are not to wait for invitations; the dead in sin never cry for help, or for places of worship; this follows, never precedes, the preaching of the Gospel;—nor are we to look for countenance, favour, and support,—these are won by the evidences of usefulness.

The contraction of these spheres of ministerial labour is admirably

calculated to further the work of God, by increased pastoral attention, by providing for a richer and more perfect ministry of the word, and by placing the societies under a more efficient superintendence. Yet it must be confessed, that, with this contraction, repose on the old foundations may take the place of active zeal, so as to lead to the neglect of the "out-door population." In this way it is possible, that nearly the same state of things may grow up, as obtained when the Wesleys began their career. It is the natural course of events, that, when large and influential congregations are collected, they should demand a full supply of ministerial attention and labour. Now, in the present condition of our body, these congregations, when capable of providing for themselves, and becoming, in that sense, independent, are coming to form the *real rate of demand and supply;* and, by the working of this principle, in the most populous parts of the country, the amount of ministerial labour expended in our Circuits is in danger of being altogether regulated by the scale of things as they actually exist. Hence, if this rule be acted upon, these assemblies may remain numerous, and, as far as they are concerned, be in a religious and good state; but the population around them, unsought, and left in their ignorance and sin, will sink into exactly the condition in which the first Methodist Preachers found the miserable and vicious portions of the community. These destitute masses had grown up, in profligacy and misery, by the side of the churches and chapels of their time, as is the case now to a fearful extent amongst ourselves. If, in populous towns and neighbourhoods, old congregations do not multiply themselves by raising new branches, at intervals of but a few years, this must be the case, so far as they are concerned. The progress of population in all such places, is incomparably greater than the increase of the means of religion amongst ourselves. It follows that, so far as our exertions are considered, on this principle, these localities are likely to be left in a state of fearful destitution. Why, it may be inquired, do not Ministers go out into the open air, as their fathers did, if they have not places of worship? For the reason already adverted to. The number of Ministers is appointed on the scale of existing congregations supposed to be large enough to demand their entire time and strength. This is the rule of the arrangement; so that no one Minister is at liberty, on the Sabbath especially,—the only time when the manufacturing population have any leisure,—to go forth in the spirit of our primitive itinerancy to seek these poor outcasts. How, then, can they, by possibility, carry out the aggressive principle? We are persuaded, that means ought to be devised, especially in the populous districts of the country, to afford a somewhat new agency to the existing supply of Circuits. By this we do not intend a *different* or an *independent* agency; but one which should be properly Missionary;

which should go beyond the limits of existing things, plunge into the midst of the miserable, outcast population, and, by preaching, and the adoption of other means, seek their conversion to God. This, it is evident, was the original design of the formation of our Circuits; and nothing can be more alien from the spirit of their institution, than to restrict the brethren to the mere supply of existing places, without the means of attempting the enlargement of the work of God.

It is not to be assumed, that there is no occasion, and no room, for this. The fact is, that the area of one of our Circuits, in the crowded cities and towns, contains nearly as large a population as some of the thinly-peopled counties. If the principle of numbers be taken as the *data* of calculation, it will be found, that, instead of increasing, our work is retrograding, in all these places. For many years it was thought, that the town and manufacturing portions of the population were much the more favourable fields of usefulness. Judging from results, this seems to have been the case once; but it is doubtful whether it is so now. This is to be accounted for, in part, by what has already been adverted to,—the absence of a properly aggressive power. A system which only provides for existing church-wants, must leave the most necessitous of the people in their sins. Strange as the assertion may at first sight appear, the truth is, that these, so far as our ministry is concerned, are the most neglected. We talk loudly and pathetically of the distress, privations, and dangers of the inhabitants of the rural districts of the country, who are either altogether without the Gospel, as taught by us, or only possess a scanty supply; whilst, at the same time, tens of thousands are living at our own doors,—in the lanes, alleys, courts, cellars, garrets of our towns and cities,—as destitute practically of the means and blessings of religion as those who are involved in the darkness of Paganism. What signifies the proximity of places of worship, or the preaching of the Gospel, to those who are dead in sin; and who, if a thought ever crosses their minds on the question of religion at all, indulge only in reflections suggested by their own enmity, or by some of the obscene and infidel publications which they are in the constant habit of reading? Saturated as this class of the community is with Infidel, Socialist, Chartist and blasphemous notions; strengthened in evil by contact, association, and union; and by labouring together in masses, propagating ungodliness and immorality on the largest scale;—they are not likely to yield a very plentiful return to the spiritual husbandman. But still as, on Mr. Wesley's maxim, we are to "go to them who need us most," it behoves us to consider this case well, and to do our utmost to bring our itinerancy to bear on these urgent necessities, these pressing evils. These moral maladies are eating like a

gangrene into the vitals of society; and, if not checked, controlled, and remedied by religion from some quarter, will re-act in dreadful power and retribution on that religion itself; wreak its vengeance on its institutions, and trample its glories in the dust. No system is so well calculated to meet this case as ours. The only mode of successful contest is, to grapple hand to hand with these evils, and to plant, by preaching, and the introduction of other means of grace, the warning and saving truth of God, in the midst of these abodes of darkness and misery. But adaptation is not all that is needed. Our town Circuits ought to be made more efficient, by the organized and wealthy congregations making some provision for their wretched neighbours; by the appointment of an agency expressly for Missionary purposes; and by a diligent and zealous application of the Gospel to the crying destitution and danger of the negligent and wicked.

5. The labours and successes of the Missionary department of our church in foreign nations, are especially illustrative of the evangelical character of our body.

We consider the Missionary or evangelizing spirit to be essential to fidelity to the cross of Christ, as well as to the commission given to his Apostles. Theorists in religion, moral philosophers, the architects of external systems for the purification of society, and the exaltation of mankind; in a word, all who exclude God, and calculate on the mental and moral advancement of the human race by the developement of innate virtue, or the impressions of conventional superstition; have, in all ages, repudiated the doctrine of the cross, and its essential corollary, salvation by faith, as insufficient for the evangelization of the world.

This is not new. Hence, though the Jews had in all ages been familiar with the doctrine of sacrifice, substitution, piacular offerings, and atonement for sin by the shedding of blood; yet, by reason of their blindness, respecting the spirit and meaning of these great typical provisions of their economy, the preaching of "*Christ crucified*" was to them "*a stumbling-block,*" (1 Cor. i. 23,) and they evidently calculated on no great results. Their splendid temple-service had become, in the hands of the priesthood, an *opus-operatum* system. Every thing beyond the external arrangement and the *sacramental* nature of the ceremonial was lost sight of. The morning and evening sacrifices, the paschal feast, the sin-offering, the ceremony of the scape-goat, and, in fact, the whole of the symbolical dispensation, seems to have lost its real meaning. In the place of a true faith in the promised and distant Saviour, whose sacrificial death was exhibited in all their services, they had adopted the common opinions of mankind, and attached the notion of some undefined and mystic efficacy to the operation of their ceremonial. This led to the state of mind which made the preaching of the cross a stumbling-block to them-

selves, and a jest as to any distant effects. The great master-principle of their entire economy,—that of sacrifice,—when it came to be developed before their eyes in the real atonement made by the Son of God, supported and corroborated by the most stupendous miracles, was a "*rock of offence, and a stone of stumbling*." (Isai. viii. 14; Rom. ix. 32, 33.) The success of the doctrine made no impression, and removed no prejudice. Looking upon the prodigies of the crucifixion, and the use made of it by the disciples of our Lord, in seeking the salvation of all men, merely through the medium of "*the traditions of the fathers*," they felt nothing but indignation and contempt. The cause leading to the rejection of the redemption of Christ, and "*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*," was a religious theory founded on false principles. The doctrines of the Rabbies and the Schools being sacredly maintained, and these not falling in with the high and glorious Christian atonement, the cross was necessarily rejected as the ground of the salvation of the world.

"*To the Greeks*" this subject was "*foolishness*." (1 Cor. i. 23.) They judged of the question by the rules of their philosophy. How could it be otherwise, till they had been favoured with the opportunity of knowing the divinity of the new system, which proclaimed salvation through a crucified Redeemer? Both the schools and the temple-service of this remarkable and polished people proposed the cure of vice, the purification of the mind, and the elevation and happiness of the species,—so far as they can be considered as contemplating these objects at all,—by perfectly different means. Their philosophy was a cumbrous collection of human opinion on questions of virtue, morality, civil order, and theology; all terminating in some self-moving power, and the very antipodes of the Christian doctrine of salvation by the merit of another. Their mythology was a system of foolish superstition and idolatry; and although some of the sentiments of religion might be found dimly embedded, yet they were so lost in the mighty chaos, as to be incapable of any effect, except a pernicious one. To such a people as this, the doctrine of the cross, and pardon and salvation through simple faith in this glorious and meritorious provision, would, indeed, be considered foolishness.

Human opinion, however embodied and however exhibited, is generally found to be uniform in its errors. Hence, in modern as in ancient times, the mere doctrine of atonement is deemed a very inadequate and insufficient instrument in seeking the conversion of mankind. The *utilitarian*, like the Jew and the Greek, considers it the height of delirium to adventure with the cross only, as the means of renovating the world. Judging of the question, not as a divine arrangement, but as the means of probable utility, he can

only think of exertions to enlighten, save, renovate, exalt, and bring to the joys of religion,—and, as the combined effect of the whole, to civil order and happiness,—by the atonement, as the very quintessence of folly. But, while he doubts and disbelieves, the experiment is going on as in ancient times; and great multitudes, left, by the insufficiency of natural religion, in idolatry, and in all the cruelties of savage life, are, by the simple instrumentality of the cross, pardoned, sanctified, added to the church, and exhibit all the beauties of holiness in their life and manners.

The *rationalist* divine, too, imagines it to be inconsistent with the claims of scholarship, an advanced state of the science of theology, —ever progressing,—the improvements in the philosophy of mind and morals, and with the present refinements going on in every branch of knowledge—to be constantly recurring to the mere elements of truth, and to preach nothing but a Saviour. Wherever this opinion obtains, and is acted upon, the issue is seen. The much-dreaded enthusiasm of piety, it is true, is gone; and, alas! much besides. Deadly errors and heresies follow; for the Christian arch cannot stand, if the centre-stone be removed. To think of maintaining the morals, holiness, life, and vigour of Christianity, without prominently exhibiting the atonement, is the height of absurdity. The moment the Saviour is driven from any portion of his church, by the adoption of a rationalizing or a superstitious system, then the old serpent nestles in the deserted place, like the owls, bats, and satyrs in fallen Babylon, breeding sophisms, and putting them forth as the verities of God. In the mean time, it is abandoned, except by the few or the many, who, having apostatized from the truth, from mere habit feel it essential to attend some form of worship. It seems to be one of the instincts of common sense, however, that men need not be at the trouble of organizing themselves into a compact body,—unless they have some other design,—and of meeting together, for the mere purpose of "*denying the Lord that bought them.*" (2 Peter ii. 1.) Such churches,—if in compliment we are so to call them,—with a beautiful apparatus of religion, and discourses delivered from the pulpit thin as mid-air, with here and there a paltry touch of fancy, imagination, and oratory, without one word of substance respecting the work of God;—we say such churches, though possibly attractive for a time, soon become deserted. "*I am the life,*" said our Saviour; (John xiv. 6;) and the evidence of this is seen in the fact, that wherever He is absent in his atonement and grace, there death reigns in unbroken silence, desolation, and ruin. No matter what the motive or the design may be, if Christ in his cross be hidden from the sight of a sinful world, whether by the verbiage of learning, the incrustations of a worldly philosophy, or the trappings and drapery of popish superstition, the issue is the same. The most plausible abrogation of

God's appointed order of salvation cannot avail. The symbols of our Lord's death, exhibited in the sacrament, can be no substitute for the reality. Hence, from all this it is manifest, that evangelical labours, founded on the sufficiency of the cross, are necessary as an evidence of fidelity to the dying Saviour, as well as to prevent a paralyzing re-action in the church itself.

The Missionary Society amongst us is not extraneous and exotic, a private adventure, an eccentric and unauthorized spiritual speculation. It gives expression to the voice of the church, and by delegation is the church; it proclaims the recognised doctrines of the body, and by its authority and appointment finds a channel for the charity, zeal, talent, piety, and love of the entire community; and it may be considered as the great artery by which its vitality is made to circulate to the ends of the earth. These remarks are intended to show that our system is, in itself, essentially and eminently evangelizing.

It is impossible, on this occasion, to go fully into this subject. All we can adventure upon is, a few brief remarks in connexion with our general design.

It is not an unfair inference to affirm, that a people, who are acting on the commission of Christ, other things agreeing,—that is, that they preach his doctrines, and endeavour to secure the ends proposed, in the salvation of mankind,—have received such commission from him, and are both carrying out the purposes of the cross of Christ, and walking in the footsteps of his Apostles. What we claim for ourselves, we are quite willing to concede to others; and should deem it not only bigoted, but directly sinful, not to see the hand of God, and the blessings of his grace, in the successes of the different churches of this country and America. And, in our humble judgment, the Church of England never presented claims so valid to something more than a national church Establishment, as in the late consecration of five Bishops in Westminster Abbey to distant diocesses abroad. This is apostolic; for it is acting practically on the command of our Lord given to those favoured ambassadors of his truth. But then other churches do the same thing,—on the rule of their own economy,—and are consequently entitled to similar commendation.

This being conceded, it may be remarked, as a proof of the strength of the Missionary feeling amongst ourselves, and of the divine blessing on the recognition of the obligation, that from small beginnings it has greatly deepened, and become universal. The duty of attempting the conversion and seeking the salvation of the whole world, is now, amongst our people, an article of faith, and a branch of personal piety and Christian love. We have something in this which has the appearance of a divine impression; or, rather, a religious principle wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Attempts to

account for it on other grounds may be made, and, undoubtedly, the pure gold will have much of dross intermixed with it; but when the selfishness of the human character is considered, it will be difficult to find any cause but religion adequate to produce this free, spontaneous, and perennial outpouring of charity; and then, again, this charity is divine, and becomes the formal instrument which God modifies, fashions, directs, and blesses, in the accomplishment of his counsels and will.

But the *accumulation* of strength and means for this holy enterprise, indicates the same truth; namely, the existence of a common principle, on a large scale, and of the divine Spirit operating through its instrumentality. This is a remarkable circumstance in our case. Wherever we behold a forest growing from tender saplings, (which might be trodden down by the foot of man,) into stately, spreading, and luxuriant trees, we are sure the spirit of vitality is there at work. We may exercise equal feelings of assurance in the case under consideration. A cause which, in its real bearings on the character of the church and the destinies of the world, was properly studied and understood by few amongst us a short time ago, and which has drawn to itself, in a few years, the profoundest wisdom, the highest talents, the most glowing eloquence and sanctified feeling, must be considered as possessing high claims. A work which engaged the prayers and affections of only a small remnant of the people, which in less than one generation attracted the consideration, conciliated the esteem, enlisted the supplications, and bound to itself the consciences, of tens of thousands of enlightened Christians; cannot but possess the vitality of truth and religion. And, besides, a channel of evangelical usefulness, which has swelled its charity from two or three thousand pounds a year, to one hundred thousand, in little more than a quarter of a century, must have elicited the deepest sympathies of the people of God; and especially so, when it is recollected, that the means of the contributors of this sum are generally limited. All this, we say again, looks like the Spirit of God moving on the discordant elements of man's opinions, tastes, affections, and even contracted selfishness, to bring into concord and harmony a great power for the accomplishment of his work.

But, more: the preparation and call of men duly qualified for the actual discharge of the office of Evangelists in the Missionary field, seem to indicate the powerful and specific operation of the Holy Spirit for this purpose. This sphere of ministerial labour is more difficult and hazardous, and demands higher qualifications, than any other; and yet suitable men have been given to the church. The principle of adaptation has been remarkable in the history of this work. Ministerial agents have appeared, as if formed for particular places and specific duties. This remark is applicable to the lower as well as to the higher

departments of Missionary work. Without experience, it is impossible to conceive the nature of the labour required from the Missionary to savage nations. If theoretic divines and philosophers united to select men for such an employment, they would certainly commit great blunders. By a concurrence of remarkable circumstances, the young Evangelists who have occupied these rough and difficult spheres of labour, have usually been perfectly fitted for the task. After surmounting the first perplexing labours of providing habitations for themselves, chapels and school-houses for the natives, and of teaching the elementary arts of life; many of these devoted men have acquired the native languages, have attained a perfect acquaintance with the manners, habits, and peculiar features of the character of the people, and have become, consequently, prepared to exercise a wise and pastoral supervision. Their discriminating wisdom, their several gifts, their patient fortitude, their laborious zeal, their endurance of suffering, unitedly, present a picture of religious elevation which bears the marks of a divine designation. What but the power of divine grace can qualify men for such duties? and what but the same grace can preserve them in a position in which every religious principle and feeling must be stretched to the utmost tension by the discouragements and temptations of their lot?

But the highest proof of the fact which our argument assumes, namely, that we have, as a church, been called, in our degree, to receive the commission of our Lord, and are acting upon it, must be sought in our successes.

It may, indeed, be objected, that success is no proof of the truth of such a claim. We think it is, supposing the work in question to be really Christian. To the argument, that "Popery and Mahomedanism were triumphant," and that "therefore if mere success be proof of the divinity of a religious work wrought, the advocates of these systems ought to have the benefit of it:" we answer, No: This only proves that evil agencies may be successful as well as good ones. But then to do evil of any kind requires no miracle,—no divine interposition. This in any shape, and on any scale, may be achieved, because in accordance with the fallen state of man. On the other hand, the conversion of men from sin to holiness is both above, and in opposition to, the powers and feelings of nature, and requires the influence of the Spirit, and the blessing and power of Almighty God. It may be argued, that He enables many private Christians to communicate saving knowledge to those with whom they hold intercourse, but that this irregular and casual usefulness is no proof of a commission from Christ. It is, however, evidence that God is with them, to bless the exertions of his servants in the duty of private admonition; and if the same blessing is seen to attend the labours of a community, it shows the same

thing; namely, that He is with the church, to enable it to fulfil its function.

On the question of this success itself, we may here remark, that it includes every fruit of piety which is taken as proof of real Christianity; and, in most of the cases, the contrast is so decided, that the evidence is the more striking. We have now in these distant stations nearly one hundred thousand persons in church-fellowship. These have been brought into the fold of Christ from amongst the most destitute, degraded, and savage races of mankind. But where is the proof of their being genuine Christians? It is varied, it is complete.

With respect to the visible change, that is obvious to all. We see them submitting to baptism, attending public worship, celebrating the Lord's supper, and holding communion with each other, like Christian men in other parts of the world. We behold them renouncing polygamy, concubinage, infanticide, and all the revolting abominations of a promiscuous intercourse; and then adopting the habits and virtues of domestic life, as taught by Christianity; whilst all its sweets and cares are sanctified by the word of God and prayer. We witness a process of education going on, where wild and ignorant barbarity reigned before; and in these seminaries of incipient light and wisdom, young and old are learning the lessons of holy Scripture and of general truth. We are cheered to see the rules of Christian morality, and the observation of Christian institutions, regarded; such as the sacredness of the Sabbath, the obligations of justice, truth, temperance, charity, purity; and every where, with the abandonment of idolatry and its associated evils, the incipient growth of all the beauties and excellences of civilization.

But all this, it may be said, is external. Yes; but it is such fruit as shows that there is an internal power of the Spirit of God and true religion at work. These people are never admitted, or desire to be admitted, into the visible church by baptism without "*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Acts xx. 21.) The usual signs of this grace invariably appear. Sorrow, contrition, brokenness of heart, an abandonment of sin;—the use of the means of grace, and fervent prayer, are the marks of repentance they show, accompanied often by the most heart-touching declarations of self-loathing, as well as of gratitude to God. Have we any better testimony than this of genuine penitence any where and in any church? Their faith in Christ is associated with the assurance of pardon, peace with God, a new creation, the spiritual life, and divine love. Can more scriptural evidence be given of the grace of God by any other people? But this love to God is evinced by keeping his commandments, doing his will, and living in habits of the strictest morality. This,

in the circumstances, is decisive of the question; and better proof cannot be furnished. All this is attended by the usual developement of spiritual gifts, which qualify great numbers to be useful instructers, in various ways, of their own countrymen.

Then we ask, How can the distinctions and honours of Christianity be withheld from those who sustain its character and obey all its requisitions? How shall the title of "churches of Christ" be denied to these first-fruits of many Gentile regions, if they live in communion, partake of the Lord's supper, edify each other, glorify God by "*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*," (Col. iii. 16,) delight in the word preached, and manifest holiness of deportment?

These societies are now found existing on an extended scale. They are the distant fruits of the evangelical labours of the church at home, and show that God has blessed its exertions. The best evidence of the hearty adoption of a great principle, and of its permanent influence, in either a Christian body or in civil society, is its practical and constant developement. We say, that the church of Christ must be evangelizing, to be true to his commission and call; that this is an essential characteristic; and we have been attempting to prove that our branch of the church embraces this obligation, and acts on this principle. This is our evidence—these are our facts.

III. THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE IS APPLICABLE AT THIS POINT: "LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME THING."

The past history of our movements may suggest many useful lessons, in reference to the present and the future. This must be attempted in the least possible space.

1. Our case shows that our ancestors never despised little things, and yet aimed at great ones. "*Let us walk by this rule.*"

Had the *small* beginnings of the work of God been despised, or neglected, the *great* would never have existed. The men constituting the *nucleus* of the largest societies were, in the commencement of our system, generally of the poorest class, few in number, and nearly destitute of all worldly acquirements. The preaching and other services were usually held in private houses, when the weather would not admit of out-door operations. The temporal contributions of some of the most wealthy and prosperous places, within the memory of living witnesses, were of the most insignificant description. The commencement of the greatest achievements, such as in Cornwall, America, the West Indies, and many other places, was limited to the feeblest form of life. Now, had the "*day of small and feeble things been despised*" or disregarded, the "*lamp*" would have been extinguished, and the "*bruised reed would have been broken.*" But no

individual believer was ever thought lightly of, but encouraged, strengthened, and countenanced; no society, however low in circumstances or numbers, or distant and isolated, was neglected; no opportunity of usefulness, though in the most rude, mean, and scattered portions of the population, was ever lost sight of from inattention; and, above all, no indication of the divine blessing in the awakening of the souls of men, was ever allowed to subside without diligent nurture and pastoral care.

But, although attention was given to little things, great ones were ever before the minds of our venerable fathers. They judged of the cause in which they had embarked, not by appearances, possessions, power, and instruments, but by the Scriptures. They knew that it was of God. They read its destiny in the predictions and promises of the Gospel, the provisions of grace in Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and in its essential divinity. Their faith, feelings, and exertions took this mould. They did not cease to cherish the highest aspirations, and fix their attention on the greatest successes, because they attended to the lesser means then in their power.

In cases of individual capacity, perseverance, and industry, nothing is more pleasing than to behold the great and majestic mind working its way upward from poverty, inadequate means of improvement, the neglect of the obtuse, and the jealousies of the discerning,—into an open field, an expanded area, an elevated position, and, finally, into the confidence which influence and rank confer. In this case, the individual himself may see his way from below even to the summit, whilst the several steps taken to reach it are regarded by the bystanders as, in themselves, but the mean and cramped movements of a common person. In somewhat the same way we may believe that many minds in our body, by the light of religion itself, saw the distant point of elevation before them which has been since attained, though with singular industry and self-denial they continued to work on the level of existing things, seizing every opportunity and improving every incident to advance the work of God.

"*Let us walk by this rule, let us mind this thing.*" We never ought to lose sight of the highest and most expanded conceptions of the truth; the greatest and most elevated faith, respecting the capacity of our own system of religion to benefit mankind; the possibility of our cause rising to infinitely greater glory, efficiency, and usefulness in the world; and of the absolute certainty of Christianity becoming universal. These are thoughts which ought to be constantly cherished, and our prayers, charities, and labours prosecuted on this scale. But, on the other hand, let us not neglect the lesser objects of attention and duty. Young, poor, and obscure disciples may, as in former times, grow into great, influential, and able supporters of the church. Unimportant places may, by attention, care, and per-

severing culture, rise into great churches; and, like the fountain in the wilderness, pour forth their streams on the surrounding sterility. The lesser societies, and what are deemed the insignificant interests, of our body, require most attention. That which is capable of growth and expansion is not the ripe and mature, but the incipient, forms of life. So it is in this work. All that can be done in the case of full congregations, is to keep them so; whilst the strength exerted in meaner ones, or in places which scarcely have any at all, is that which must yield the greatest fruit. We are in danger of overlooking the details of good in the impression of a general object; we neglect the little by the presence of an ideal notion of the great.

2. We find that our fathers, in this work, adhered firmly to principle, but held themselves free in detail. "*Let us walk by the same rule.*"

The whole history of our church illustrates both parts of this proposition. The great principle by which our fathers were governed was, the paramount obligation to propagate the Gospel. In acting on this, our Founder especially had to counterwork all his own prepossessions, his high Church notions, his old attachments, his prospects of preferment and honour, his literary reputation,—and expose himself to almost universal contempt. But, through all, he was true to the master-feeling of obligation. Nothing could bias his mind, or turn him out of his course. During the long period of his public life, we behold him adhering to the same great duty, and doing, to the utmost of his ability, the same thing. His sons in the Gospel partook of this feeling, and acted on the same principle. They were not only men of one book, but they were eminently men of one business, from which they never deviated.

But while they were firm to the truth of God, and the primary design of its revelations, they felt themselves free in non-essential things, and in the manner of accomplishing their great work. They took care not to bind themselves in fetters when their divine Master had made them free. By this rule they were able to hold the doctrines of the Gospel without embarrassment, and carry them out to an illimitable extent, where, in other circumstances, they would have been restricted. Like the first Evangelists, to them it was a subject of indifference whether the truth was proclaimed on the mountain-top, at the sea-side, in the school of *Tyrannus*, the synagogue of the Jews, or in private houses. The great question was, the salvation taught, and the effects produced; and not the place where, or the manner how, it should be published. By thus distinguishing that which is of perpetual obligation, from that which is accidental, they were inflexible in purpose, and yet free in action.

The same point must be regarded by ourselves. We have no choice

as to duty. The terms of the Gospel are fixed and settled by its Divine Author. Principle in religion is not feeling, the dictates of the judgment, the echo of the conscience,—but firm, unwavering steadfastness in the truth of God. The duties of the ministry are of the same authoritative nature. The salvation of mankind, including all the means to be employed, is the one object to be sought. Other things are not only indifferent, but partake of the nature of guilt, when they are employed as the substitutes for a legitimate end. Any thing put in the place of the direct intention and purpose of so preaching the Gospel as to save the lost souls of mankind, is a deviation from the obligation to which every Minister and every church is supremely bound, by the terms of their respective relations to Christ.

While this is the case, it does not follow that we have no latitude and diversity of means. It may be impossible to do the same work of God under all circumstances, in a similar way; and it does not follow, that the good is not to be sought because it cannot be attempted on the plan of some canonical law. There may be the utmost order in the midst of apparent irregularity, Nature is working out a perfectly orderly result, in the midst of peals of thunder, and the rocking of the tempest. It is so in the moral movements of Divine Providence,—war, pestilence, famine, embarrassments, and distress. The elements are in disorder; but there is no eccentricity in the wisdom, will, and equity of God. In like manner, when the Gospel is held and preached faithfully, constantly, and fully, though it may not "*give peace on earth, but rather divisions,*" yet the confusion is not in the truth, but arises out of the resistance to its spread. On these grounds we are not to be intimidated by the charge of disorder. Whilst the word of God is truly held, that of itself will be a rule; and never to deviate from its truth or its designs will secure a steady and, so far as human action can be so, an immutable line of operations.

3. The labourers in our vineyard did not expect success without sacrifice. "*Let us still walk by this rule.*"

The sacrifices made, and the privations endured, to bring our cause into its present state, were of the most extraordinary kind. In the home-work, for many years, every man who entered into our ministry did it in the prospect of incessant toil, the privation of almost every earthly comfort, casual means of subsistence for himself and family, the endurance of great physical suffering; mortifications from contempt, derision, and mockery; often positive persecution from mobs, instigated by persons in elevated life; and the loss of all the hopes and prospects of advancement in social rank, and the acquisition of property. Great numbers have found a premature grave in the midst of their anxieties and labours, "*not counting their lives dear to them-*

selves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 24.) Those who have been called to foreign duty have suffered in other modes, as well as in those mentioned, and have fallen in greater numbers. A residence among pagan and uncivilized people, insalubrious climates, the absence of all the arts of social life, and the ten thousand mental anxieties and miseries attendant on the introduction of the Gospel into untried scenes amongst hostile tribes, capricious and fickle nomade nations, inconstant and childish Heathens;—these and similar trials have attended every step of this work. Many have been sacrificed in the conflict; and their bones lie in distant climes, the first-fruits unto Christ, in a soil to be tenanted in future ages, by millions of those who will "*sleep in the Lord,*" and at the last day rise to "*glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life,*" through the labours and sufferings of these men of God, followed by others in a similar career of shame and glory. "*None of these things moved them.*" They pressed to the post of duty, though they might certainly foresee that it would be the scene of trial, if not the bed of death. Our happy religious circumstances are not merely the fruit of great ministerial wisdom, fidelity, and labour, but of untold and unthought-of suffering. So far as man is concerned in our church-privileges, they may be said to originate in tears, prayers, labours, difficulties, and death. In our day, we have but a poor and inadequate conception of the external miseries endured by those into whose "*labours we have entered.*" But they "*fainted not.*" Receiving their commission from God,—and knowing that it was from him,—they felt like the Apostle when he exclaimed, "*Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!*" (1 Cor. ix. 16.) The promise of freedom from suffering was not found in their commission, and they did not dare to "*flee from the face of the Lord*" when they met with difficulties in their course.

It is certain that now, and in future times, those who are found faithful to their calling must meet with trials, if not of a similar nature, yet of some kind or other. It is true as a fact, however it may be accounted for, that a great work of God never took place in the world, without the instruments and witnesses being called to bear the cross, and often to endure martyrdom. It should seem as if true religion and easy worldly circumstances could scarcely co-exist in the present state of fallen human nature. We have, where it is painful to witness them, faint whispers,—half-suppressed and half-expressed sentiments, feelings, and *longings*, after a power and domination over conscience, which, if conceded and carried out, must lead to the exercise of some form of coercion against *schismatics*, *heretics*, and *separatists*. The progress of human opinion, and the events of the world, present singular phenomena to the mind of the thoughtful. The

existence of extreme views often leads to the conclusion, that the *extreme opposite* cannot possibly take place. We instance in the case of religious liberty. Because freedom, even to license, has long predominated in this country, it is generally thought, that any thing like mental, social, and especially religious, thraldom is utterly out of the question; and that sentiments leading to this cannot be entertained by the free and enlightened generation of which we form a part. Now, strange as it may seem, just the opposite is the rational deduction. This is the very point of danger—this the period which good and moderate men should watch. When the extreme in any particular direction is reached, as the human mind cannot remain quiescent, or society stationary, there must be a rebound or a divergence. We are in this transit-state at present; and it is very ominous, that an audience—and a willing and multitudinous audience—is given to opinions which, a few years ago, we should have thought it impossible for Englishmen to write, or, if they had the audacity, it would be hopeless to attempt to find any to read.

But the principle is illustrated by the history of the world; and we only allude to one period,—that of the Protectorate, followed by the reign of Charles,—the one an epoch of liberty up to the point of murderous madness, and the other, immediately following, distinguished by an attempt to re-establish the dominion of the "MAN OF SIN."

Notwithstanding these tendencies, we trust the good providence of God will avert from our country the catastrophe of persecution. But even if this privilege should be granted, difficulties and sufferings of other kinds must be expected. An arduous contest of principles—the evils of division—the alienation and loss of friends from the side of evangelical religion—the occasional failure of resources—the decay of some portions of the visible church of Christ—are evils which must perplex, grieve, and try the faith of those who are alive to the extension of the kingdom of God. Besides, in distant countries, the habits of the people, the predominance of superstition, and insalubrious climates, present gigantic difficulties. Faith, patience, fortitude, moral courage, love to God and the human race, and life itself, must be severely taxed, before the world can be brought into the fold of Christ. Great judgment, great virtues, and great sacrifices, can alone conduct our evangelical efforts to an issue corresponding with the principles we hold, the successes of past time, and the position we now occupy. The religion of Jesus Christ has never been seen in prosperity and triumph, but in association with the suffering labours of its confessors, or the martyrdom of its saints. A different state cannot await the spiritual church in future, whilst the world remains the same; and if we calculate on great results, we must make up our minds to expect great trials.

4. Our ancestors acted on the conviction, that the obligations of the church are not dependent on circumstances. "*Let us walk by this rule, let us mind this thing.*"

Had they adopted the contrary principle, they must have been prevented from taking a single step in extending the Gospel. The labyrinth of difficulties in which they found themselves was of the most discouraging nature; they were not merely of a negative quality; as the want of encouragement, power, property, colleges, church-organization, rules of action, and promising fields of inviting enterprise—all of which are considered important, and, in most religious bodies, essential. An ecclesiastical basis is generally felt to be necessary to any powerful external movement; and to advance into untried scenes of evangelical labour, without being sustained by this *corps de reserve* of funds, friends, and means, is esteemed an evidence of enthusiasm. These advantages were all absent in the first efforts of our body. But, more than this: positive barriers of every sort seemed to block up their prospect of success. The religious world frowned, took up the weapons of controversy, assailed the feeble, but noble, phalanx of evangelical soldiers, and, as far as the spirit of the times would allow, the ecclesiastical authorities, in many instances, resorted to direct persecution, and treated the disciples of the "*new* doctrine," as it was stigmatized, as fanatical and deluded persons. But in the world without—if a contradiction may be allowed, for the church and the world were much the same—other difficulties presented themselves. Almost universal ignorance of the truth of God prevailed. This was attended by indifference, irreligion, profligate habits, and all exasperated by a wide-spread scepticism.

Now it is evident, that in this state of things a conviction of duty could alone operate to induce the first promoters of this work of God to undertake their noble task, and their immediate successors to sustain it. There was a period when all which we now see, as fruit and success, only existed as a germinant principle, a great truth, an imperative obligation. These were piously cherished in a few faithful and glowing hearts. Without troubling themselves with calculations as to impediments, or indulging in morbid feelings respecting consequences, they seem to have acted on one simple rule,—the discharge of present duty. They knew their commission obliged them to this course; and, as is always the case, the profitable improvement of one opportunity made way for others; the diligent occupancy of a limited sphere invariably enlarged it, or prepared for a new one; and the seed of the Gospel sown in one place, by its growth and fruitfulness, created means for the cultivation of other territory. In all this they took not their measure of proceeding from any thing without. They regarded, in the first degree, the truth of God com-

mitted to them in their call to the ministry; and in the second, their feeling and sense of obligation. These motives unitedly constituted the exciting cause, the sustaining power, and the stimulus of all their labours. The energetic piety within moved them forward, and not the attractiveness of the scenery in the world around. It is a noble spectacle to behold great and grand enterprises undertaken, difficulties overcome, conquests won, and important results wrought, from the mere force of indomitable principle; or rather, as in this case, from the elevating influence of piety, and the rich anointing of the Holy One. This has been remarkably illustrated in our history. In the isolation of their faith and piety, in the solitude of their early pilgrimage, in the absence of all sympathy in their objects, and in their destitution of all earthly means and help—what could sustain these wonderful men in their toils and hopes, but an inward and undying conviction of duty?

We are, in some departments of our work, placed in different circumstances, and in all we are cheered by, at least, distant prosperity. Yet it is an unsafe and fallacious rule, to take the external state of the cause of God, however encouraging, as the standard or the motive of duty. We must rather draw our obligation of exertion from the word of God; and, if we do so, we can never stop till we have carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth. But even in seasons of hopeful prosperity, there must arise fitful periods of trial, when the church can have no guide but the Bible, and no power of support but naked principle, sustained by Him who is "*mighty to save.*" It would be extremely difficult to discover any other means of safety and adequate encouragement, even at the present moment. How Christianity,—we do not say any particular church, but Christianity,—as a dispensation of religion on earth, is to be extricated from its present labyrinth of perplexing controversy; and by what means it is to emerge into light, unity, peace, and consequent power; it is difficult to divine. And where, in the midst of the infinite chaos of doctrinal sentiment, which is now afloat, any good man can discover a place of rest, but in the word of God, it is equally impossible to imagine. Here alone we may calmly repose; and it should seem as if our divine Lord, in the order of his inscrutable providence, and by the permission of recent events, designed to drive the believing and spiritual church from all external confidence, to an entire reliance on his word alone. This is sufficient; and in all possible events will never fail, in the case of those churches which fully and piously adhere to its truths, to furnish every requisite guidance and support. "*Wisdom,*" drawn from the sacred oracles, can never be erratic, but be "*first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.*" (James iii. 17.) *Principle* resting on an enlarged and comprehensive view of the offices, mediatorial power,

and rectoral glories of Christ—together with the plain precepts of the word of God, can never be feeble and ineffective. *Motive* to duty, diligence, and labour, drawn from the encouragements and promises of this sacred storehouse, will always exist in force and energy. Viewing all things in the light of holy Scripture and the great destinies of the human race, we shall move on to fulfil our appointed portion of labour with willing zeal. Our own personal and collective responsibility, considered under the impressive lessons which represent life as short, probationary, accountable—and yet as big with mighty influence on the religious and immortal state of others, will lead us to "*work while it is day.*" The weal or woe of the generation around us, when contemplated in unison with the doctrines of the Gospel, respecting their guilt, danger, but possible recovery and salvation, must stimulate to exertion. The advancing age and high destinies of the world; the certainty of great interests being connected with the movements of the church, be they of what kind they may; the plain, clear, and full exhibition of the riches of divine grace in the spiritual recovery of the human race; the death, claims, glories, and promised dominion of Christ; the consummation of all the different parts of the Christian salvation in another bright and glorious dispensation; are among the permanent lights of the word of God, to guide us in days of darkness, to encourage us in seasons of trial, to stimulate us when tempted to inaction, and to furnish us with motives for laborious sacrifices, when all around is confusion and evil.

Let us, then, in imitation of those who have gone before us in this work, draw all our principles of action from a pure, a divine, a never-deviating source, however changeful the circumstances without may appear. Come peace or come war, the truth of God will sustain us, if we have the grace to renounce the "*horsemen of Egypt,*" and grasp this shield alone.

5. Our fathers acted on the conviction, that the expenditure of power was its growth. "*Let us walk by the same rule.*"

This has been remarkably illustrated in our history. When they were intrusted with but little strength, they used that little; though they possessed but feeble resources, they applied them with vigour; and being but few in number, they unitedly devoted all their powers to the service of God. These were rules in constant operation. Individuals converted to God were all expected to take their share of duty. No drones were tolerated—no trifers encouraged in their day-dreams of self-indulgence—and no one was supposed to be exempt from the cross. If mental strength and endowments amongst some were seen to be promising and hopeful, they were laid under instant requisition for the work of God; and though, at first, native power was often undeveloped, and fine qualities of mind remained rough, unpo-

lished, and not very well adapted to the service of the spiritual temple; yet, by application, culture, and the experience of age, innate and hidden excellences were brought out, and the employment of strength was its growth. The same has been the case in the spiritual life. Young converts, on their first acquisition of faith and grace, having been put in possession of the rudiments of the spiritual character, have, from feeble beginnings,—by prayer, the teachings of the Spirit, the discipline of the church, and constant exercise of the grace imparted,—attained great eminence in holiness, ripeness of wisdom, and usefulness in the house of God. The occupation of talents, whether two or five, has invariably brought an increase, and the promise has been amply fulfilled, "*Whosoever hath, to him shall be given.*" (Luke viii. 18.)

The same principle has been seen in its application to the collective body. Only by the use of strength as it has been given, could the church have grown, in its different departments, to its present magnitude. Indeed, in some cases, especially in respect to the appropriation of the temporal resources of the community, it has often been thought that the rule has been carried too far, and that our means have been employed to exhaustion. That temporary difficulties have been created, may be admitted; but that "*there is that scattereth and yet increaseth,*" has been proved by the issue. By a blessing from God,—for we can only attribute it to this,—when the several departments of the church have expended their utmost strength in promoting the conversion of men, that strength has invariably increased by the exertion. If any instance admitted of a doubt as to the application of this principle, it would be seen in the expenditure of our resources on distant fields. But how stands the fact? Instead of the *materiel* of the body being diminished by the augmentation of the funds for foreign work, the increase of Ministers on this distant field, and the rush of a strong flood of feeling, zeal, and energy to this particular quarter—it has turned out that our means have all along multiplied with the expenditure. Greater progress has been made, even at home, by far, in the multiplication of chapels, schools, and all that goes to constitute the temporal power of a church, since the Missionary department was more fully cultivated.

We must "*walk*" still "*by this rule.*" IF EVER THE ECONOMICAL PRINCIPLE BECOME FIRST IN ORDER, AND WE MOVE ON THE SCALE OF OUR ACTUAL MEANS, AS ALREADY IN EXISTENCE, THEN WE SHALL BECOME STATIONARY, AND THE NEXT MOVE IN THE PROCESS WILL BE DOWNWARDS. If, on the other hand, the religious principle is acknowledged and acted upon, then we may fairly hope that progress and prosperity will follow. Let the obligations and duties of religion be fully felt, in regard to the salvation of men and the extension of the Gospel, and then economica-

arrangements will be elevated to these views, feelings, and noble purposes; but if the actual and *already-developed means* are constituted the rule of operation, then we make the scale of existing liberality and zeal the *maximum* of the exertion of the church. In this case, we drag the spiritual principle and obligation down to a level with the economical arrangement, instead of endeavouring to raise the economy and means to the elevation of the religious duty. Had our fathers waited for the settlement of a beautiful economy, in which every possible provision should be made for the exigencies in which their duties might place them, they would never have moved in their work at all. They took the opposite course. They obeyed the divine call, and "*went out, not knowing whither they went,*" (Heb. xi. 8,) trusted God, left all things in his hands, and, planting the seeds of life in the "*field, the world,*" left them to grow, and, directed by the hand of the Husbandman, to clothe themselves in material form.

This is the safe rule; and it will be difficult to discover another. Let strength be used, and it will be increased; let great objects be sought for the honour of God and the good of man, and adequate resources will be furnished; let the standard of holy zeal, extended usefulness, and the conversion of souls, be invariably kept before the attention of the people of God, and He will give them enlargement of heart to enter into the design; and let the stream of charity be kept flowing—wide, deep—and the fountain will supply it with waters in augmented fulness. All things in the church have their re-action; and this principle amongst the rest. In case the resources of every kind intrusted to us are employed faithfully, zealously, and in the spirit of unbounded charity, the very use will multiply the means in question; whereas, if they are unemployed, they will, like *plethora* in the animal ecomomy, produce inaction, paralysis, or death.

6. In the progress of their work, our fathers believed in a concurrent movement of providence in support of religion, and looked for its indications, in their own labours and trials. "*Let us walk by this rule.*"

Nothing short of confidence in "*the living God,*" acting through this providence, could have supported these good men in their arduous enterprise. Considering themselves called by Christ to the task of proclaiming his Gospel to the world, under most discouraging aspects, they prayed for and expected the divine protection and guidance in their career of toil and trial. The singular equanimity displayed by our venerable Founder, in the midst of labour, incessant travelling, fierce polemic opposition, and aspersions on his character and motives—as well as direct persecutions by the mob—can only be

accounted for on the principle of trust in the guardian care of God. His co-adjutors partook of his spirit. They needed this soothing persuasion as much, or more than their leader. He moved rapidly from scene to scene, partook of the excitement of the varied events through which he passed, was greeted, hailed, and supported by some, —often influential—friends, and at the end of his longest and most laborious peregrinations had a retreat,—a home to which he would retire, where he found rest, in the midst of the cheering companionship of the best of his people. It was not so with many of his Preachers. They were called to remain at the post of duty in all circumstances. Their annoyances were not, generally, on so large a scale, but they were incessant; their labours were not so great and responsible, but they were of that humble, trying, and exhausting nature, which is the greatest possible exercise of patience; and in their movements, instead of being cheered by witnessing extensive and popular results, and being encouraged by the countenance of powerful friends, they often delivered their message, and performed their work, in the midst of insignificant and disheartening scenes. Thus buffeted and worn down, they needed the protection and support of a divine power, and they sought and obtained it. In the hands of God they placed themselves and their cause. He sustained them in their lonely wanderings, their fiery trials, their wants and necessities,—raised them from obscurity to eminence, and gave them more than life itself in the prosperity of their mission, and the salvation of men.

But, more: they evidently observed with pious vigilance the movements of providence in favour of religion. As redemption and government are in the same Almighty hands, originate in the same Godhead, emanate from the same throne above, and contemplate the same object, though in different modes, they will, of course, constitute a concurrent movement. Hence it is eminently the duty of the spiritual church to watch with enlightened attention the overruling events of the divine administration, that the openings for useful evangelical labours may be entered, and the season of opportunity be eagerly seized. We have many proofs that this duty was diligently attended to. There appears but little of human forethought, calculation, or *forcing* of circumstances in our history. Every event seems to arise naturally, easily, and calmly, in the way of facilities for usefulness. This was owing to the interposing power of God.

We are called to imitate our predecessors in this. "*Are not thine eyes upon the truth?*" (Jer. v. 3,) exclaims one of the Prophets, intimating the fact by the mode of the expression. Then, if we hold the truth, seek its propagation, and endeavour ardently to extend its victories, we may be assured that the eyes of God will be upon us. Success

is not to be anticipated without difficulties, either at home or abroad; but if we labour under the persuasion that we bear a divine commission, which is under the guidance of Him who gave it; and that He is exercising, for our security, His wisdom, His care, and His love; we need not "*fear what man can do unto us.*" This may be difficult to realize; but it is essential to personal consolation, steadiness of purpose, strength of principle, and tranquillity in trials. We may be certain that in the general sifting, which now seems only beginning, our own doctrines, economy, and standing cannot escape the common ordeal. By a mysterious power, a storm is gathering in the heavens, which, in its fury, is likely to shake every ecclesiastical institution that is not founded on the rock of truth. Those churches which are secure as to doctrine and spiritual religion, may, nevertheless, be greatly exercised in their faith. God is the safe resting-place of his people, and they are encouraged to exercise trust in his adorable providence till the "*tyranny be overpast.*"

But a higher state than mere safety awaits the true church of God. We are assured from his own word that to Christ "*every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" (Rom. xiv. 11; Phil. ii. 10, 11.) The power of evil is not the only power in the world; satanic agency is not the only agency at work; the spirit of antichrist is not the only spirit now "brooding over the chaotic waters of the great deep;" and heretical pravity is not the only voice which is awakening the world from its slumbers. No; God is abroad in the accomplishment of his counsels, and the fulfilment of his word of truth; in the vindication of the injured rights of his glorious Son, in the support of religion, and to give effect to His own true church—in her institutions, spiritual claims, great objects, and universal extension; and He is also gathering to himself forces to check, control, disappoint, and overthrow for ever, all the enemies of the millennial reign of Christ.

In this state of things, solemn and magnificent events must take place. A marked, peculiar, and ILLUMINATED series of providential movements, in connexion with Christianity, must arise. From our position in the community of churches, we cannot be exempt from great duties or great sufferings; from being extensively employed, if found fit for the task; or from suffering an awful punishment, if, in the day of trial, we are found "*vessels*" unfit for our heavenly "*Master's use.*" The will of God is being accomplished; and although many "*signs of the times*" are wrapped in mystery, yet one thing is plain in our case; and that is, the paramount obligation of preaching, in every place and by all our means, the unadulterated doctrines of the Gospel.

We conclude: THE TIMES GOING OVER US, THE STATE OF THE GENERAL CHURCH, THE POSITION OF OUR OWN BODY, THE CLASHING CONTENTIONS AROUND US, THE NECESSITIES OF DISTANT COUNTRIES, AND THE ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION, DEMAND FOR THE GUIDANCE OF OUR WORK THE HIGHEST WISDOM; AND THAT WISDOM IS FOUND IN RELIGION ITSELF.

THE END.

LONDON:—PRINTED BY JAMES NICHOLS, HOXTON-SQUARE.

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